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Increasingly Jaded Views

Steven's P.O.V

Ruby just proposed to Sapphire and she, with a blushing blue face, happily accepted. I was so happy, as was Amethyst and Pearl, to see that the two halves of Garnet were getting along together again. Believe me, it's hard work trying to keep them close when problems come up. But, since their as close as family gets nowadays, I do what I can and what I must to hold them together. In fact, speaking of holding them together, I got big plans scheduled for today. I'm currently sitting in the living room with the coffee table stacked with different arts and crafts supplies. It is, but not limited to, some colored construction paper, some glitter, markers, stickers, and a paper folder. The purpose behind these is to make invitation cards for Ruby and Sapphire's wedding. Since I suggested the idea in the first place, the engaged couple felt it right that I should organize and manage their wedding.

I smile and look at all the creative tools laid out in front of me. I have so many ideas. Then a thought comes to my mind. What are Ruby and Sapphire's personal preferences? I mean, it's their wedding and their cards I'm gonna be making, so they should at least have a say in it. I stand up and look around the Temple, looking for the red and blue gems.

"Ruby! Sapphire! I need to talk to you about something" I call out playfully, a grin on my face.

I wait and hear no reply, calling out again before the smile drops from my face. Hmm, maybe they're outside enjoying the Sun together. I push down my worry and bring that smile back, all the while heading to the front door and stepping outside onto the porch. Leaning on the railing, I look out at the beach area surrounding the Temple, but yet still find no temperamental red gem and a calm and collected blue gem. Sighing, I turn around and rest my back against the wooden beam. So much has changed since I was little. I've come so far, as did everyone, and have

accomplished so much. From the little kid who could barely summon his shield to a Crystal Gem that fights against Homeworld Gems.

But, there's some part of me deep down that can't help but feel some resentment towards the Gems. I know it may seem heartless and cruel to sound like that, but the truth, facts, and events all overrule it. If you ask me, I think Garnet and Pearl work more to drive this team apart rather than keep it together. The secrets they keep and the lies they spread, it's corrupt and makes them just bad people in general. If Garnet had told me about the Palanquin instead of keeping the information from me, maybe my dad wouldn't have been kidnapped and taken to the Human Zoo. And it's not just that too. Garnet does tell that she loves me and calls me her 'Cutie Pie', but I can't help but feel falseness and emptiness behind those words. It's no better when she's split up either. Even though Pink was my mother and her big secret reveal was truly horrifying to me, Ruby and Sapphire acted like they were the most effected, like betrayed children and if Rose was their mother and not mine. Those two completely ignored my feelings on the matter, only caring about themselves and how it affected their relationship. I did all that I could to bring them back to each other after the truth caused a break up and they just acted like everything was fine and that I wasn't any help at all.

I also feel like Pearl's worse than Garnet. I pleaded with her, begged for her to tell me what my mom was like and all she just kept beating around the bush. It's especially bad that Pearl chose to keep Mom's identity hidden from me because, at the end of the day, I'm her son and I deserve to know more than anyone. The worst part is that time so long ago when she berated me and lectured me that I should be more like Rose. But, after what I've been told about Rose Quartz and Pink Diamond, I told myself that I shouldn't aspire to be like her. It's bad enough that she roped Garnet into that line of pressuring, but when I asked Pearl to train Connie, it all starting going downhill. Ever since her first day of training, my Jam Bud's become more and more like Pearl to the point where she's putting these things in her head that could very well change her for the worse. It also hurts because Pearl doesn't even want to train me as much anymore, leaving that to either Garnet or Amethyst. Luckily,

Amethyst comes through for me at the end of the day

She's one of the only people, aside from Peridot, who help me feel good about myself. And it boils down to the fact that those two like me for who am and not for who I could be. They also understand the weight of the revelation on my shoulders and how it bears more relevance to me than Ruby and Sapphire. I truly love Amethyst and Peridot and really do appreciate all that they do for me, especially since the truth was revealed years ago and now I'm 19 and still having to deal with it. I really don't like thinking these things about the three people closest to me, but I can't just push those negative thoughts to a corner of my mind and expect them to fade. It's just the truth and trying to deny the obviousness of it is just pointless.

"Steven? Steven!" A voice jars me from my thoughts.

I jump slightly and turn my head to see Connie standing on the porch a short distance away, wearing her training outfit with my Mom's sword slung across her back. She smiles warmly at me, but I don't return the gesture, recent angry thoughts still present in my mind that I'd rather not take out on her.

"Here more training with Pearl, I assume?" I ask.

Connie comes over and leans on the railing next to me as I turn to look back out at the ocean near the horizon.

"Oh, yes, Steven. It's so exciting! I mean, I'm making great progress and getting better every time. Pearl says that I might even be as great as your mother one day" The girl rambles excitedly.

I have to keep myself from roll my eyes her, looking away so she can't see my annoyed state. Even after I told Connie my mother was a lying, traitorous murderer, my Jam Bud still wants to be like her so she can 'do it for me'. But, at this point, I don't feel like I want her as my knight if Rose's standards and qualities are what she's going to go by and choose to emulate. I don't think she's an inherently bad girl, it's just Pearl, and maybe even Garnet, manipulating her.

"I'm getting really close to honing my emotions too" Connie

continues to talk, "Pearl said that soon I should be able to expertly fuse with you. Just imagine it, Steven! We could be Stevonnie nonstop and conquer any foe that comes our way!"

"Yeah, yeah, sure" I shrug, not thinking too much of it.

Connie sees this and leans closer to try and look me in the eye.

"Is something the matter, Steven?" She asks.

I'm about to reply to her, but then the front door opens and two sets of footsteps come bounding in my direction. I get up and turn around from my leaning position, seeing none other than the happy couple themselves standing in the door frame.

"Come on inside, you two. Pearl said that she had something urgent to tell us" Ruby says, Sapphire just blushing while gazing at her future wife.

Connie's expression hardens immediately, her nodding and going right on ahead of me through the front door. I exhale through my nose and head right in myself, ignoring the smiles that Ruby and Sapphire give me as I pass by. Once we're all inside, Connie goes right up to Pearl, who's standing smack dab in the middle of the Warp Pad.

"Good, everyone's here. Now, we have an important mission ahead of us. A couple of gem mutants have wandered into the strawberry fields and we have to clear them out. We can't allow Rose's special place to be contaminated by their corrupted presence. Connie, are you all set?" Pearl briefs, looking down at Connie when finished.

"Yes, ma'am" Connie replies, nodding confidently and stepping onto the Warp Pad besides Pearl.

Ruby and Sapphire step up too, surprising me because I'd thought that without Garnet, those two would never go into hostile territories. Looks like I'm wrong about that, though. Pearl then looks at me expectantly.

"Come on, Steven. We're waiting on you" Pearl says calmly.

"I don't think I want to go, Pearl. I mean, you promised that I could work on these wedding invitations three days ago. But every day since then has been filled up with other missions, so I haven't gotten the time I wanted" I explain.

"You'll get your time, Steven. Just not right now. Come on, we need you" Pearl frowns.

"Yeah, come on, Biscuit! We got gem monsters to fight!" Connie exclaims with enthusiasm.

I sigh, shake my head, and walk up onto the Warp Pad, not looking at anyone. It's funny though that Connie thinks that fighting gem mutants are fun, even though that's only gem-related business. I hold the anger steady inside and stand cross armed as Pearl activates the Warp Pad. We're all drifted away swiftly and touch back down on the strawberry field Warp Pad mere seconds later. The gem mutants are really easy to spot, mainly because they're so big and make a lot of noise. But, from the looks of it, the creatures don't appear to be hostile, all three of them just wandering around aimlessly. That doesn't stop Pearl, Ruby, and Connie from summoning their weapons and looking ready to charge the docile beasts. I huff at their eagerness for violence and summon my shield while walking out ahead of them.

"Steven, get back here! You don't know what you're doing!" Pearl calls after me, surprise evident in her tone.

"I know what I'm doing, Pearl! Just please stay out of my way" I call back at her.

I run right up to the first gem mutant. I quickly deliver a roundhouse punch, followed by a backhanded blow with my shield. The beast staggers back a bit, but I then jump up, summon my shield in the other hand, and bring it down on the beast yet again. The gem mutant shivers and as I go to attack again, it grabs me with one of it's many hands, throwing me over it like a sack of garbage. I collide hard with the ground and roll over onto my stomach groaning in pain. I growl and moan, trying to get back on my feet. The pain is still to great, though, and I fall back down, and aching feeling pounding in my head. The sounds of weapons

clashing are heard a short distance away and I look up to see Ruby, Pearl, and Connie battling it out against the same gem mutant that wiped the floor with me. As I lay there in pain, I feeling my head pulsing and begin to hear the faint whispers of some voices. I concentrate and try to make out what they're saying, wondering if it's not just that I hit my head too hard. The voices become clearer and I can hear them properly.

"Why did Steven get defeated so easily? I swear, Connie is much better than him. I'm sure if Rose saw Steven fail like he did, she'd adopt Connie as her own daughter and get rid of Steven..."

"Steven, why didn't you ask to fuse? We both know that Stevonnie is the best fusion. We could've knocked that abomination down easily..."

I grit my teeth, knowing full well who those voices belonged to. Connie and Pearl fight furiously while Ruby delivers a few punches here and there, showing each of them off to Sapphire who blushes every time Ruby blows a kiss at her after a punch. Growling in pain, I lift myself up and stagger around the left side of the battle. The Gems and Connie are too wrapped up in the fight to notice me slinking around them, which angers me more that they didn't bother to see if I was injured. I work my way past Sapphire, who's still blushing at Ruby's flirting, and get to the Warp Pad, glaring once more at the same people who dare to claim that they love me. Like hell they do, for if it was true then they've would've shown that they cared about me. I clench my fists in anger and activate the Warp Pad, my mind set on going back to the Temple to do what I originally wanted today. As I float through the energy stream, though, one thought circles in my head like an infinite loop of hatred.

I can't trust them anymore.

I quickly arrive back at the Temple and walk over to the living room table. The supplies remain untouched from where I left them, making me partially better knowing that nobody tried to put them away. With a huff and some crossed arms on my behalf, I plop down right where I sat before. I don't move to work on the cards yet because I need to get my emotions thought through before starting. You see, I'm not a boy that usually likes to fester and stir on his

problems, but after years of passively dealing with this, I've become a lot more jaded against the Crystal Gem leadership. As much as I wish to let it go and be happy again, I'd just be fooling myself and making a stupid mistake. The fact of the matter is that Pearl, Ruby, and Sapphire love mother than they do me and it's even worse when Connie, who was once the only human I could talk to about my problems, gets roped into this Gem business by Pearl and starts believing in the misguided ideals of Rose Quartz merely because Pearl's spoon-feeding her the information. So when the Gems eventually demand to know why I left, because I know they will, I'll tell them exactly that or something along those lines.

Sighing and gazing over at the art supplies again, I slowly grab the scissors and a reasonable stack of construction paper. Then, I start making some horizontal and vertical trims along the edges to cut out a smaller card shape. As I'm doing this, I continue to release some of my more bottled up thoughts and emotions.

"Ugh! Why did this have to happen?!" I think to myself, snipping off paper shards with forceful scissor strokes, *"Rose didn't even tell my dad the truth of who she really was. If anything, all of this with me and the Gems is on her because she set a poor example for them, both as a leader and a parent!"*

Tossing the completed cutout to the side, I pick up the next piece of paper, my arms starting to shake with the anger that's rising from my stomach. As I trim this card, my scissor strokes are more hard, blunt, and rage-driven. I feel myself frowning and gritting my teeth too, my anger really getting apparent. I then hear the sound of the Warp Pad activating and that's when I know that they've returned. The sound of approaching footsteps and an insistent foot tapping is certainly a give away, so I don't bother to turn around because I know what I'll see. So I just continue on with my work.

"Steven Quartz Universe! What do have to say for yourself!" A shrill but uptight voice yells at me.

I immediately know it's Pearl because only birds can squawk that much when talking.

"I don't quite know what you mean, Pearl" I reply.

The footsteps sound again and this time, four sets, one blue, one red, one brown, and one white come into my peripheral vision. They must have moved in front of me to try and get me to talk face to face with them.

"You know fully well what I'm talking about! Leaving us to deal with those monstrosities after I specifically said I wanted you along! You acted very disrespectfully and irresponsible, Steven!" Pearl continues to yell at me.

I still don't look up at her, instead trying to smile while cutting out more cards. Seeing my reaction after Pearl's outburst prompts gasps from Connie, Ruby, and Sapphire.

"She's not wrong, Jam Bud. You were and still are being pretty disrespectful to Pearl and us. Please, just make eye contact with me and we can talk about this. Alright, my biscuit?" Connie says, starting out mean but then transitioning to trying to make me feel guilty.

I scoff and shake my head, keeping my glued to my work as my own small act of rebellion. Great, now Connie's getting on my case too? This is bad. The next thing I hear, though, is Ruby's frustrated sighs.

"Stop being such a kid, Steven! Just listen to Pearl!" Ruby snaps.

I frown deeply and say what needs to be said in order for them to understand.

"Ruby, Pearl is not my mother. She can't tell me what to do, especially since I'm old enough that I don't have to listen to her even if I wanted to" I say, glancing up at the red gem with an annoyed impression.

"I'm beginning to be disappointed in your behavior, Steven. What happened to our sweet little Cutie Pie that never talked back with us and believed in his mother?" Sapphire sighs, shaking her head.

The way she says it makes it sound like they aren't even aware of their own past actions, which I think, in of itself, is quite laughable

to be honest.

"Are you even listening to yourselves?" I ask with a raised eyebrow, "After everything you did, you want to play dumb? Well, sorry, but I'm not going to entertain that."

Connie and the Gems all have wide eyes now, looking at me like they can't believe that it's really me talking. And even though I said I wouldn't speak more on it, I still find my inner anger surfacing and causing me to continue talking.

"Connie's been dragged into this mess because of you, Pearl. She's been corrupted into being just like Mom, willing to throw her life away for a useless and unjust cause. And you, Ruby, and Sapphire just lie non-stop that I can't trust in what you say anymore. The cherry on the top is that you three never stop with all the babble about how great Rose was and how I should be just as 'perfect and flawless' as she was, when I shouldn't have to be. I'm my own person, not your leader's replacement" I ramble on.

Connie frowns, but merely stares at the floor, unable to say anything. Sapphire, on the other hand, begins crying whilst clinging onto Ruby, who's steaming with anger. Pearl also looks angry, her hair sticking up all pointy like. I, however, don't want to continue this, so I stand up and start walking towards the Temple's front door.

"Where do you think you're going!?" Pearl yells at me.

I hold the door open slightly and peer back at her, not dropping my passive expression.

"For a walk. It's the right thing to do when you get into an unwanted shouting match. Maybe when I get back, we can be serious about planning this wedding" I say before walking out the door and descending down the steps.

Halfway down, I bump into Amethyst and Peridot.

"Hey, Steven. What's up?" Peridot asks, smiling her cute smile at me.

"Yeah, what's hanging, Stee-Man?" Amethyst also asks.

"Well, I got into a bit of a fight with Ruby, Pearl, and Sapphire. But they started it and only fed the flames of hate, so I'm leaving to cool off and probably talk to my dad about it" I explain, knowing that I can trust these two.

Both girls look peeved. Amethyst is gritting her teeth and gripping her summoned whip like she wants to strangle someone. Peridot is clenching her fists so hard that the metal she's carrying is beginning to bend. Needless to say though, that both members of the Shorty Squad appeared ready to stand by me.

"Those clods are as good as cracked!" Peridot exclaims, prompting a hand on her shoulder from Amethyst.

"I agree, Peridot, but first, let's shoot some hurtful words their way and see how painful it is compared to our weapons" My sister describes, smirking mischievously.

"You're right, Amethyst. Steven, we'll handle them. You go and do what you need to do to cool off. And thanks for trusting us with this. It means a lot, especially to me" Peridot says, pecking my cheek with her lips once she finishes.

I touch the spot where Peri kissed me and blush, embarrassed by the sudden intimate gesture. She and Amethyst then go up the stairs past me, Peridot winking at me as she went by. Soon, I hear the front door open and close and the sounds of more shouting commencing. Believe it or not, though, I'm actually curious as to what they're saying and do my best to listen in.

"You don't support Steven enough! Why else do you think he chooses to talk to me and Amethyst more than you clods!" Peridot exclaims.

"Good grief, Peridot! You are sounding just like Steven right now and the last thing I want my Sapphy and I to deal with before our wedding is another stick in the mud like you!" Ruby snaps back.

"You see, that's the kind BS I was talking about, Ruby. And, you wouldn't even be having a wedding if Steven hadn't proposed it. What

you should be feeling is gratitude because my Sugar Cake was willing to dedicate his time into making sure you two could be together even when you weren't Garnet. The least you could do is to give him the thanks and appreciation he deserves from this!" Amethyst argues.

"My Jam Bud's a nice person anyway and since the Gems are on a human world where marriage is a loving gesture, it'd be expected of a couple that wants to be together" Connie comments.

"I swear, Amethyst. Why did these morons even allow a pathetic organic into their inner circle. These defects have less consideration and mannerisms than that false Rose Quartz clod!" Peridot huffs indignantly

"You shut up about my Diamond, you Homeworld parasite! She may have had her difficulties, but her ways were righteous and just. As Crystal Gems, we follow her ways because it is right!" Pearl growls at her.

"Her definition of 'right' included the shattering of millions of Gems, Pearl. My Stee-Man is right about her being a murderer and a liar! You just can't accept it! I swear, I wish I could just go back in time and stop Pink from ever doing her stupid rebellion!!" Amethyst retorts at Pearl.

I widen my eyes at the last thing Amethyst said. For some reason, it just sticks out to me more than anything else that was said. Not sure why, other than it sounds very appealing to me if I could ever make it happen. Shrugging, I trudge the rest of the way down the porch steps and head onto more soft covered ground. I know what I should do next, so without any further hesitation, I start walking towards Beach City. The setting immediately helps me feel better. Everyone is going about their daily routines without a care in the world. It helps me feel more relaxed, like they're not purposefully watching me because of my reputation. Dad's car wash comes into view just as I reach the other end of Beach City. He's out there working too, cleaning Dewey's strange campaign van, you know, the one with his face all over it. Anyways, Dad's just finishing up when I come close, Dewey thanking him and driving away.

"Hey, Dad" I say to get his attention as he turns around and smiles.

"Schtuball!" Dad exclaims, hugging me a second later, "What brings you around the Universe Car Wash?"

I chuckle a bit and wait for him to let go before I speak.

"Well, Dad, I kinda had an argument with the Gems today. Over Mom" I respond plainly.

"Oh, man. Have they still not gotten over her whole 'fake identity' thing?" Dad asks, sounding slightly frustrated.

"Sort of, yeah. But the main deal is that they still insist that I should try to be like her, even though they know fully well what Mom did during the Crystal Gem Rebellion. It's infuriating" I vent.

"I can understand that" Dad says nodding his head, "But it still doesn't make their behavior acceptable, though. Seems to me like you need a little breather from all that, Steven".

"Yeah, I do. I just wanted to stop by and explain it to you in case I or any of the other Crystal Gems came around looking peeved. But, anyway, thanks for listening Dad. I'm gonna bounce and let my mind wander" I explain.

Dad smiles and grips the hose he's carrying.

"You do that, Steven. Glad you're handling this so professionally!" Dad says as I begin to walk away.

When I get to the nearest street corner, I turn around and return the smile.

"It's what I do best!" I tell him.

Going Backward to Move Forward

Steven's P.O.V

I walk through the neighborhood, my hands in my pockets and my shoulders hunched. My emotions are so conflicted right now that it's hard to decide what I'm feeling. Anger? Sadness? Betrayal? Disappointment? All of those combined mixed with a dash of overwhelming disbelief? Who knows at this point. I'm not going anywhere in particular at the moment. Just wandering around the city and collecting my thoughts. It's the best way to figure out how to deal with all these rampant and heightened feelings.

Heading in a steady pace down the boardwalk, I look to my left and see Fish Stew along with Frybo's fry stand. Kiki, Jenny, and Koffi are pretty busy inside their restaurant, putting pizzas into take out boxes and serving others that wait at tables. Peedee's working inside with his father while Ronaldo is outside on his phone, probably searching through sites to post on his blog. Same old, same old for them, almost like their lives are completely unaffected by all the change happening around them. I find that astonishing, but probably just because all that has transpired was more key in my personal life than theirs. I'm happy for them because I care very much about them and even more about people as a whole. It's why loyalty is my most important principle currently and why I try so hard to keep my family safe. However, when some members of my

family show character that's not worth protecting, then my view differs slightly.

Fighting the negative emotions threatening to emerge, I keep a forced smile on my face and wave at the two restaurant families as I fully pass by their locations. Moving onward and outward away from the more productive and busy parts of Beach City, I turn my direction towards a place with guaranteed solitude and a great atmosphere for thinking. The Beach City Forest. I don't know why, but being alone and engulfed in the tall plants has always given me more peace and tranquility than anything found at the Temple.

It's a bit of a walk to get there but once I'm standing right outside the outer tree line, I somehow feel instantly better. It's a kind of feeling that I really need right now, so I do not hesitate to walk right in and let my mind get lost in the haze of leaves swaying in the wind and the smell of dirt and stream water. Many low-hanging branches whack me in the face, but I ignore them and don't let them anger me further. I'm in so deep now, both in thought and in the woods overall, that I'm unable to catch myself from tripping on a large rock in my path. Tumbling head over heels down a small hill, I come to a stop and shut off the music so I gather my thoughts before all the dizziness sets in. Luckily, I can focus more on how much my head hurts now, along with where in the heck that drop in terrain came than letting my mind be scrambled.

Shaking my head, I ease myself up and off the ground, wiping the dirt and twigs from my knees. I then look around to see what made me trip, but what I find instead is cause enough to make me put my earbuds and phone away. Before me is what appears to be the opening of a small cave. It's only about as tall as your average coffee table, though, so that explains why it so easy not to notice. What peaks my interest about it, however, is how something as remote and random as an underground tunnel can be found in a densely forested area. But, I came out into the woods for distractions and this seems like the perfect getaway. Getting down onto my knees, I crawl forward towards the slim entrance and peer inside to see if anything is visible beyond the darkness. I can't make out anything and that just fuels my inner Indiana Jones more, spurring me to grab onto the sides of the entrance and begin pulling

myself inside.

Now, people might scold me and say that I'm being foolish and/or stupid. But some people like me desire unknown places or things and to be able to explore such is what makes the experience all the more worthwhile. Bearing all that in mind, I pull myself deeper inside the cave entrance. As I go further and further in, it gets darker and darker, but at a certain point, I feel my eyes heat up and glow, twin beams of pink illuminating the space. Everything is much easier to see now and due to my newfound ability, I'm able to note that I've been heading in a downward slope, closer to the center of the Earth. The tunnel doesn't seem to end anytime soon either, so I keep on going.

Because I don't wear a watch and because I can't reach my phone in the compact space, time is really hard to tell. Trying to keep track in my mind is quite annoying and unfortunate. To my best and frustrating estimate, though, I've been traveling for about ten minutes. It's at this point when I begin to see a leveling out point in the tunnel ahead. I come to said point all too quickly and find myself at a sudden end, the tunnel dropping off into a tall and thin chamber. Looking down, I sigh in relief knowing that the fall is not long at all, maybe a second or two. I then carefully ease out of the tunnel and roll as I hit the surprisingly wet ground below me.

It's a tad swampy, but water isn't really a pet peeve of mine so I just brush it off as I stand up. The chamber, in all its entirety, is small in width, but massive in height. Twisting my head up, I see a hole as wide as a trampoline that shoots directly up through the bedrock, a sliver of evening sky exposed at the very top. At the center of the room lies a circular platform with another circular-shaped podium in its center. On that podium is a glowing green orb the size of a soccer ball. My curiosity spiking, I tentatively approach and gaze closely at the foreign object. Upon scrutinizing analysis, I see that the glow is emanating from a miniature hourglass spinning in the center of the orb. My eyes flit back and forth, my mind making a connection that this is very much like the time ball that the Gems and I ran across in that now flooded temple, meaning that this orb must serve the same purpose. I then do what any archaeologist would do in my place: I gently grab the orb from underneath and

hold it in between my hands. I always have a fear of dropping things important and this situation proves to be no different, the orb not helping with its off putting vibrations.

"I swear, I wish I could go back in time and stop Pink from doing her little rebellion!" Amethyst's voice rings in my head from earlier. I then feel a smile grow on my face and my gaze fixed on the time orb. You're right, Sis. And now, with this in my possession, I think it's time for me to make a few things right. Pink Diamond won't be able to escape her crimes for much longer. I feel a smile beginning to grow, but then a sudden and loud crack of thunder makes me jump. Clenching the orb tighter, I look up and see that the sky has developed storm clouds and that lightning is brewing. A slow trickle of rain then begins to fall down the hole in the ceiling, a thunderstorm all but present at this point. Creating my shield underneath me, I then use it to lift myself up and raise me up the hole and towards the surface.

Lets see what the Gems think of this!

Amethyst's P.O.V

I'm panicking like crazy right now. Steven has been gone for hours and still hasn't come back! But, what tops everything off, is the fact that it's now pouring rain and storming outside. I'm trying to ease the hot clench of fear and nervousness on my gem by pacing, but it's not helping. Peridot looks scared too, holding herself and trembling while staring directly at the floor. However, the human, Pearl, Ruby, and Sapphire don't seem as bothered by Steven's disappearance as me and Peridot, adding in some anger with all that anxiety. The four are just sitting around and doing nothing, aggravating me to the point where I stop my pacing and stomp over to stand right in front of those self-centered snitches.

"Before you shout, Amethyst, do know that we all are deeply worried about Steven" Sapphire speaks, using her Future Vision to cut me off.

"Yeah? Well, you certainly are all at your wits end hoping that Steven will be alright. Yeah, you four are definitely worried" I remark sarcastically.

"Excuse me, Amethyst! I care about Steven very much! And I'll have you know that if it weren't for this storm, I'd be out there searching for him right now!" Connie snaps back at me.

"Please, Connie. If you truly care about someone, you don't let anything stand in your way of finding him, much less some clouds and a couple drops of rain" I scoff, blowing some loose hair out of my face and crossing my arms, "Why are you still here anyway? I'd have thought your mom would've come around to get you by now".

"She had to work late and said that she'd be fine with me staying here until she got off. And, as I've repeated many times, I'm not leaving until my Jam Bud comes back!" Connie answers pointedly, standing up with hostile intent.

"I'm with the Amethyst on this one, you clod. You appear to exhibiting traits that aren't compatible with a standard caring organic. Your choice of wording and logic is very askew, making it all too clear to me that something is not quite right with that primitive mind of yours" Peridot retorts, her tone reverting back to that condescendingly analytical vibe that she had when she wasn't a Crystal Gem.

"Jam Buds are just a nickname, Peridot. It's meant to symbolize a special connection between people. You're so bossy and manipulative that you couldn't have anything special with Steven in a thousand of your gem lifetimes" Connie spits.

A cup then hits the young girl on the forehead, it's metal properties meaning that it was Peridot's doing.

"You really should stop talking, Cloddie. It'll make you sound less unevolved that way" Peridot smirks.

Connie then rubs her head in pain before jumping through the air to slice at her with Rose's sword. I stop her with a blow to the neck, pausing her midair movements and making her hit the ground.

"Enough, you two! This bickering is getting us nowhere! Now, if you guys don't mind, I'm going out to find Steven" I say, glaring at Ruby, Sapphire, and Pearl.

"Amethyst! The last thing we need right now is the team getting more separated" Pearl says indignantly.

"Pearl's right" Sapphire adds, "Steven will come to us, that much I am sure of".

"Oh, really? Well then, if you're so sure, then why don't you put yourself to good use and tells us where Steven is with that future vision of yours?" I say matter-of-factually.

"Don't talk to Sapphire like that!" Ruby argues.

"No, no, Ruby. It's fine" Sapphire says calmly, "And it is the least I can do".

She then frowns, her lips forming a tight line. Sapphire concentrates for half a minute but then gets this shocked look on her face.

"Sapphy! What did you see?!" Ruby asks, holding her fiance while looking into her singular eye.

When I see Sapphire's expression, fear and disbelief is all over her, metaphorically speaking.

"Steven is here!" Sapphire says, lifting my spirits and making both me and Peridot smile, "But, he also has something powerful and ancient in his grasp".

That makes our smiles drop and the worry return. A clap of thunder then sounds and a flash of lighting appears outside. We all jump at the volume of it and jump even more when we see Steven standing outside on the porch, his silhouette outline by the lightning strike. He has something glowing in his hands, but before I can get a real close look at the thing, Steven hovers up and out of sight with his floating shield trick. A thump is then heard on the roof and we all look at each other.

Steven's on the roof!

Disregarding any past argument against going outside, we all run out the front door and onto the down-pouring porch outside. I look up, as does everyone else, and see Steven on the edge of the roof. In

his hands looks to be a bigger replica of the time artifact lost in the flooded temple incident a while back. Steven himself looks very stern, glaring down at three particular people within our group with dissatisfaction.

"Steven, come down from there!" Pearl calls.

"Please, you could get hurt!" Connie says alongside Pearl.

"No" Steven replies, "I will not come down. I will not follow your corrupted and backwards ways any longer".

Ruby and Sapphire look scared, almost as if they couldn't believe that this is Steven talking.

"Biscuit, your scaring me" Connie calls out, drawing his attention to her, "Come down and we can talk about this. Please, this isn't the boy that I fell in love with".

We all gasp at that last part, minus Steven. Connie just admitted that she loves Steven.

"I'm sorry, Connie. This is just how it's gotta be." Steven replies flatly, causing Connie to nearly erupt into tears, "Like I told you before, I have a destiny. And now I know what I must do to set things right!"

Connie's now on her knees, crying in the rain as Pearl kneels down beside her to offer some comfort.

"Steven! How dare you be so heartless!? Connie just admitted some deep feelings and you just disregarded them! You should be ashamed of yourself!" Pearl shouts at him, earning her a glare from me.

"I wouldn't be talking if I were you, Pearl" Steven says, holding that glowing orb close, "You turned Connie into you, a selfish liar who is willing to die for a cause that is unjust and wrong, not to mention making her rely too heavily on fusion. Do you know how many times she's wanted to be Stevonnie? She can't let that stuff go and it's your fault. I've already told you this."

Silence fills the moisture ridden air, hanging like the hot temperature all around us. Connie keeps crying on the porch floor while Pearl comforts her and the two small gems stand quietly. I personally think Steven made some pretty accurate judgement calls, especially with the Homeworld issue. I mean, even I wouldn't be that selfless if that happened to me.

"All that ends now. With this power, I will make sure that Ruby, Sapphire, and Pearl are taught a lesson in how to be people. But know this, you three. Where I'm going, you won't be able to follow" Steven sighs, gripping the orb and raising it higher.

Before anyone, myself included, can say anything, Steven speaks loud and clear.

"I wish I could go back to when Pink Diamond received Earth as a Diamond colony" He shouts.

The hourglass inside the orb then spins more rapidly and vibrations begin emitting from the sphere. The intensity is so high that even the Temple is shaking. Then, the energy from inside the time orb expands and expands until it completely engulfs Steven. As quick as a finger-snap later, the energy sphere vanishes, taking Steven along with it. Sapphire then hugs Ruby desperately.

"What did our Cutie Pie just do?" Ruby wonders out loud.

"He went to make things right" I respond, shooting her a death glare.

The red gem only looks down, ashamed of herself. Sapphire does too, setting a very grave atmosphere. With Connie now bawling her eyes out and Pearl trying to get her to stop, it leaves only me and Peridot being the calm and collected ones. We stand side by side and look down upon the mess of a team. I shake my head, but then hear something truly heartbreaking whispered through the rainy air.

"Oh, Steven. If only I could've told you that I love you too" Peridot whispers.

Steven's P.O.V

Looking around at the lush and heavily vegetated environment I find myself in, I can't help but feel a slight sense of confusion as to the time period. Scratch that, I remember researching it via Google. I think that this is the Neolithic Period, a time of large population growth and the integration of agriculture into modern society. So, yeah, won't have to come across any dinosaurs. That's good, because I wasn't looking forward to the possibility of running from a T-Rex or getting accidentally eaten by a herbivore. However, the option of danger is still not out of the question. Considering that I'm alone in an unknown place with no direction or any help whatsoever, tension will most likely be high until I can figure something out.

What I should focus on right now is my step by step plan of what to accomplish while I'm here. Step One, find a way out of this freaking rain forest. Step Two, find the Beta Kindergarten. Step Three, wait until Pink shows up with Pearl. Step Four, follow her back to the moon base. Step Five, talk some sense into her about not doing the war and, if necessary, hit her upside the head once or twice. Step Six, stick around long enough so she won't just go back on her word. Step Seven, if all else fails, travel to Homeworld and tell the story to the Diamonds. And lastly, Step Eight, go back to the present with the backup time orb.

Thinking it over in my head, I know the plan's not perfect but it at least has a framework. Sure, some steps like Three, Five, and Six may stretch out longer than others, but I'm confident that it'll be effective. Also, I have to consider that things may go wrong at any point. Since improvising isn't really my strong suit, I'll just have a simple backup plan to survive by any means necessary and do what I must to stop the deaths of millions of gems and humans. After all, I came here for that explicit purpose and I'm not leaving until I make it happen.

I once again take note of the area and then decide that it's best to begin Step One. It'll quickly follow Step Two because once I get my bearings of where I am in relation to the Kindergarten, getting out of this massive forest will lessen in difficulty. I gotta get to higher ground to be able to see though, since the number of trees makes it

near impossible to see whatever lies ahead. It'll also help because from what I remember the Kindergarten was located in a rocky and grey mountain type of landscape. Doing a quick scan on the trees closest to me, I pick one that is just about the tallest. I put the time orb in my gem, mainly because it's pretty hard to climb while holding it, and taking a running start. Once my feet make contact with the base, I push myself up and backwards, grabbing the nearest branch. I'll admit that I don't have the best arm strength but man did it come through for me today because with little trouble, I pull myself up and go for the next branch. It's a long way up but I can do this all day.

In the span of about five minutes or so, I reach the tippy top of the tree. Because of its round shaped top, it reminds me a lot of a clove of broccoli. My stomach rumbles at the thought, informing me of my silly decision to not grab something to eat before leaving. However, I push those thoughts to the back of my head and pop out the tree top like a gopher out of the ground. One thing I notice immediately is that it's actually still light out, though the Sun is beginning to recede behind the horizon. The smell of rain is also in the air, so I best not stay up here very long or else risk getting struck by lightning. A problem that I run into though is that I can't spot any sort of mountains. Sighing, I clamp a hand over my forehead and think about what I could do instead. What other ways can I use to determine directions? Are mountains usually located to the west or east? Can the temperature be used to indicate their location? Ugh, all questions that I'm uncertain of and I absolutely hate the feeling of uncertainty. Well, I guess in the meantime I should focus on finding something to eat, seeing as my stomach rumbled just a moment ago. Can't get to where I need to go if I die of starvation after all.

Feeling a tad depressed about my luck and progress up to this point, I do my best to slide down the trunk of the tree. It was a pain to climb up the tree, but coming down was much more fun. It came and went fast, me landing back on the ground in mere seconds, but it felt great nonetheless. Now it was time to find some food and even I knew that wasn't going to be easy. I go with the survivalist approach to food gathering: looking for berries and bits in the bushes. TV shows have people do this kind of stuff all the time so

who's to say it's a stupid idea? There's a small clump of bushes around the base of the tree I just ascended, so I start there. Kneeling down and looking closely, I see some tiny sized blackberries. Might not be fully grown, but if they're poisonous it won't matter because it'll kill me either way. And that in of itself is another stressful factor because when placed in a dire situation as I find myself in now, you want to believe that any berry is edible because you're freaking hungry and want to have something at least. I say screw it and grab half a handful of these berries and pop them in my mouth, chewing thoroughly before swallowing.

The immediate taste doesn't give off any tangy or toxic vibes, so I grab another handful and down it too. It's nice to feel, but it won't be enough, so I stand up and begin scanning the bases of other trees for similar bushes. Not so much luck with that. Desperate to find more, I decide to do something very risky and wander through a tight path of trees to my right. While the tall plants are so packed that it's kinda hard to determine what direction is where, I go based off of my relative placement. I crouch low and move slowly, not wanting to miss anything. I don't stop moving, wandering on and on without caring where I may end up. I do stumble across a bush with red berries, but my mind puts up a red flag. Red is most commonly the color for bad, just like with 'the big red button', so I don't touch them. I might be acting foolish, but better safe than sorry. And besides, I'd had some black ones already so the situation isn't too dire.

Onward and onward I search, my eyes and legs eventually beginning to tucker out. I've had my gaze glued to the forest floor for so long, I've completely forgotten where I am. Foolish Steven. I look up, crack my neck and back, and see what it around me is like. In the end, I'm frightened because the area looks no different than the one I began in, which makes me question whether I ran in circles this whole time. What's even worse though is that it's now pitch black out, the Sun probably going down while I was busy. I feel myself start to panic, the fear rising in me along with some repetitive breathing. I don't like feeling this way and I know I should focus, so I slap myself across both cheeks.

"Get it together, Steven" I say out loud, "You can't allow yourself to

lose it now. You're not even halfway there yet".

Shaking my head furiously, I take a deep breath and massage my temples. Going with the smart approach now, I summon the time orb from my gem. While it's main function doesn't help me right now, it's bright green glow does aid me by providing a night light of sorts. Clenched between both hands, I spin around in a circle and intently scan the ground. Nothing at first catches my eye, but then a vague color change appears on a bush a short distance in front of me. I saunter over and get down on my knees, holding the glowing object so I can see.

I'm shocked at what I see. It comes in two successions, the first being the fact that I've stumbled across some blueberries instead of blackberries or Cotoneaster redberries. I audibly sigh in relief but when the same color change flashes in my peripheral vision, I turn around to see if it's what I think it is. That counts the second part of the good news. All around me was more blueberry bushes, forming a near perfect circle around me. In other words, I hit the jackpot, baby! I grab a handful and stuff it in my mouth. Definitely has a better taste than blackberries, so I go another round and again and again and again. I do it enough to the point where the juices cover my mouth and fingers and my stomach feels so full.

The satisfaction of being entirely fed then summons the need for rest. My eyes begin to droop and I yawn profusely. Since I'm in an optimal spot, I decide to rest here. Laying down on the surprisingly soft grass, I form my gem bubble around me and get comfortable. The bubble is the equivalent of a tent for campers, basically doubling as a shelter and protection from hostile forest creatures. My eyes gaze up at the tree tops, their swaying branches making me sleepy. I don't fight it and let my mind shut down. But before I fade into unconsciousness, I agree that I'll recommence the search for the Kindergarten in the morning. At least then I'll have some better lighting.

~~ Meanwhile... on a vaguely familiar moonbase... ~~

??? P.O.V

When I saw Yellow and her colonies, I felt like ruling one would be

something grand and very internally rewarding. It looked so great, the world at your fingertips and knowing that any action you take or order you send out will alter the destiny of the planet forever. All that is why I begged and begged Blue and Yellow to give me my own world. They seemed annoyed by my asking and eventually relented, handing me the planet called Earth. I was so excited, but then Blue showed me the moon base and told me that I was required to remain here a great sum of the time. At first, I didn't think too much of it, saying ok and sitting down at the main control room. However, the boredom quickly set in and I wondered why I was so eager for this. If this was what running a colony was like, how could Blue and Yellow be fine with it?

I sit at that very desk now, my screen up and active as always. Like I do almost everyday, I scroll through the planned requirements of any Diamond colony. It's still as pointless as ever, I mean, why should I care about how many Kindergartens there will be and how many Warp Pads will be placed in each colonized facet? It's completely mind numbing and I could use a bit of variation right about now.

I feel someone's gaze on me however and look down to see my Pearl's eyes on me. She turns away quickly, looking embarrassed that I caught her looking. I look away just as fast, feeling bad about it. It feels awkward now and I don't need that adding to my problems so I decide to just clear the air and ask my loyal Pearl what she thinks.

"Could you imagine that running a colony would be this dull?" I remark, grinning out of silliness.

"I could imagine it, if you would like me to, my Diamond" Pearl replies, her voice flat and monotone.

My smile drops, her response not being what I was hoping to hear. I was hoping that she could provide some refreshing insight to my emotional state, but maybe my Pearl just isn't meant for that. Her temporary smile drops when she sees my change in expression, and I move on with a new topic, knowing that she'll be able to help this time.

"Show me the status of the Prime Kindergarten" I order kindly.

"Yes, my Diamond" She replies instantly.

Pearl puts her hand on my control console and lets herself be emerged in the data. I rest my chin on my palm, my eyes narrowing with blatant frustration. I always ask her to check what's happening in the Kindergartens but every time so far it's been nothing. I begin to think that this time will be no different, but what Pearl says completely changes my attitude.

"The first Quartz soldiers are due to emerge soon" Pearl informs me.

"Yes!" I exclaim, shocking Pearl so much she holds her head in a daze, "Finally something exciting!".

This is the first big event to happen ever since I gained control of the planet. I had to witness this and I knew the perfect way to do it. Getting up and out of my throne, I head for the stairs that lead down into the lower levels of the moonbase. What I seek is a story below, but I have no problem with ignoring the stairs and landing in a crouch near the observation orb.

"Hurry! We've got to see this!" I urge, my Pearl speed walking down the steps.

She approaches the orb and at my command, activates it. The tall grey walls of the Prime Kindergarten fill the space of the chamber. Everything that was previously here fades away, making me feel like I'm really at the Kindergarten. Bending down, I see a Quartz-shaped hole begin to glow in the wall closest to me. A soldier pops out a second later and I get a little too caught up in my over excitement, welcoming the first Amethyst to Earth only to have her walk right through me. Sadness pangs in my gem and my smile drops. My pearl sees this and walks closer.

"I wish I could just be there" I sigh, looking at the ground.

"I'll have us warped to the Kindergarten at once, my Diamond" Pearl replies unexpectedly.

I'm shocked by her response, the extremity of it causing me to look

up from my wallowing in sadness.

"W-What? Hehe, no. If I went down to the Kindergarten, I'd never hear the end of it from Yellow and Blue" I rant.

But then a feeling of hope ignites inside me.

"Oh, but can you imagine? Me, laughing and playing with the Amethysts?" I say, trying to smile again.

"Yes, I can imagine it" Pearl replies, projecting a circular image of me hopping around with two Amethysts, "You look so happy".

Pearl's attempt to cheer me up helps, but only for a second. I know Yellow and Blue would certainly scold me if I ever set foot in a Kindergarten. They explicitly told me over and over that a Diamond does not tend to surface matters personally, rather having a Jasper, Amethyst, or Ruby deal with it instead. I end up revealing these thoughts out loud and Pearl yet again offers some help. She says that I could mingle with the Amethysts, but only if I alter my gem shape into that of a Quartz, that way I could blend in and not be recognized as the Diamond I am.

Two core thoughts conflict inside me as Pearl's suggestion floats around. One is that Yellow and Blue would be very upset with me and the other thought is that this may be one of my few chances to get out of the moonbase and have some real fun. The second thought ends up winning and I close my eyes to concentrate. I let my eagerness and excitement fuel my actions, feeling the tingly sensation of my gem rotating. I feel myself get shorter and my hair grow curly. Pearl looks up to thank me for the previous compliment I gave her, but I have to usher her gaze downward because of my new smaller form.

Pearl then leads us over to the Warp Pad and together, the two of us step on. What her and I are about to do is wrong in any rule book constructed by Diamond kind, but what Blue and Yellow don't know can't hurt them. The Warp Stream appears a second later and whisks the two of us down toward Earth.

I can't wait to see what's in store for us!

Questioned by a Diamond

~~ 9 Hours Later... ~~

Steven's P.O.V

So there I was, enjoying a relatively peaceful nap, when all of a sudden I experienced an all new meaning of the term 'rude awakening'. Ever get the feeling like a freshly hot knife blade is twisting inside your stomach like a screwdriver? I hope the answer is no. But, in all seriousness, that's the sensation coursing through me right this instant. It, in fact, woke me right up from my nap, making me check my surroundings to see if anyone had snuck up on me and was attempting murder. However, as I quickly realize, my bubble is still up so it would be difficult to get inside without me knowing. With that cleared up though, I'm still sitting here wondering what is happening.

Shaking my head, I do what any normal person would do when they experience pain and lift up my shirt to assess the situation. I drag my shirt up slowly, partly because I'm scared of what I will find and also to just add the dramatic tension that you'd see in a zombie apocalypse with the person wondering if they were bitten or not. When I take a deep breath and force the fabric up to my chest, I look down and am thoroughly surprised at what I find.

Where my 'rose quartz' one was now sits an upside down pink diamond! Mind you, I knew that my gem was actually a diamond after Pearl spilled the beans, but never before had I seen my gem rotate to look like such. I wonder if Pink felt the same way when she changed form. Eh, probably not. She's a full Diamond and I'm half human so the pain most likely attributes to my stomach flesh getting in the way. What mainly puzzles me though is how my gem rotated on its own because I know for sure that I didn't do

subconsciously. Maybe it's a power that I haven't been told about, who knows?

Seeing the slivers of sunlight peek between the tree branches, I tell myself it's time to get up and resume the search for the Prime Kindergarten. I may have had minimal success yesterday but come hell or high water, I'm gonna find this place if it's the last thing I do. I stand up from my surprisingly comfortable bed of grass and deactivate my bubble, taking in the freshness of the forest air. My stomach, now spared from its previous burning sensation, rumbles with a new sensation: hunger. Eager to replenish my energy, I eat up from the blueberry bushes surrounding me. I stuff my face until I'm full then wipe my mouth with the corner of my shirt sleeve.

Now, back to the task at hand. Gazing at the scenery around me, I weigh out my options. I could try the whole tree climbing maneuver again but I'm certain if I'll any better results than last time. Another thing is just trying to find a clearing or break in all the foliage. Pearl mentioned that her and Pink stopped by a small pond at some point in their exploration. Maybe if I find that distinct landmark, I'll have a clearer path. Since I have no explicit sense of direction, I pick a path at random, opting to trudge diagonally through the trees in front of me. Believe me, it's tightly spaced and has a lot of insects, so it's not an ideal vacation spot but I'm not gonna be sticking around long enough for it to matter anyway. Besides, if I'm gonna try and make something good out of this whole endeavor, I might as well enjoy the solitude.

I step over shrubs and avoid the puddles that nature puts in my way for a really long time. And speaking of time, since their ain't no sundials in sight, trying to know how long I've been frolicking around is just as impossible as trying to understand why Connie could be such a bad friend. After what feels like a long while to me, I notice the environment beginning to change. The grass was a brighter green, more sunlight was visible, and the sound of running water is more than recognizable. All those factors match up with a clearing so feeling emotional revitalized, I rush toward the noise with hope inflaming my soul.

The sound of water trickling over rocks grows louder and clearer until I run right smack dab into a river. No trees cover the stream

from sunlight, making me feel a lot warmer both realistically and emotionally. I'm about knee deep in water but I don't mind because unlike what people commonly think, water isn't gonna kill you. Still, since I found a river and also since it's flowing downstream, I know I'm on the trail for finding that pond. Walking through water is difficult, the water slowing your movements and all, so in order to make good time, I pull myself back onto the forest floor. The river is about twelve feet wide, side to side, so following alongside it without losing it will be pretty easy.

I pat myself dry as best I can, afterwards picking up the pace and walking along the riverbed. The river runs for a long ways but eventually, it comes to a more shaded clearing and empties into the very pond I've been looking for this whole time. Grinning with excitement, I change my pace from a steady walk into speed walking, anxious to be getting closer to my goal. The slope downward is only a bit steep so in no time at all, I'm easing myself down near the rim of the pond and basking in my image reflected off the water's surface.

Suddenly, I just get a strange itch to go swimming. I don't know why it is, maybe because of the hot temperature outside or just the fact that I don't do it that much? Unfortunately, I can't do it now though because if I make too many stops to try and enjoy myself, I'll more than likely miss my window of opportunity in crossing paths with Pink Diamond. I mean, certain events triggered her whole plan of starting the war, discovering humans, seeing the Kindergarten sucking the life out of the planet, and the most well known being that the Diamonds wouldn't listen to her about her claims. What I gotta do is step in before things get to outta hand, but at least I'm at a good spot right now.

Then, out of the blue, I get another strange itch only this isn't one you can scratch and make it go away just like that. I feel my diamond gem start to pulse and beat like an amplified heartbeat. At this point, I'm beginning to get a bit freaked out by it because first it rotates on its own and now it's pulsing on its own too! My gem almost seems to have a subconscious. It's both scary and weird, making me feel like I have another heart implanted in my stomach. My breathing gets all short and rapid, my fear levels spiking.

But yet I can't help but wonder if my gem is trying to tell me something. I wanna go jump in the pond to alleviate some of this weirdness and cause I'm still internally debating whether I should from before, but as I turn in that direction, the pulsing decreases a tad. I frown, turning back to where I was a second ago. The pulsing picks back up again. My curiosity grows, seeing the beginnings of a pattern at play.

I think my gem is trying to show me where to go.

If I think about it more, it makes sense. If I keep going in the direction where the pulsing grows more frequent, chances are high that I'll find either Pink or the Kindergarten. So I walk forward deeper into the forest, listening as intently as possible for an increased vibration. I walk for about two minutes until I have to pause and spin around until the pulsing picks back up again. I end up going northeast, running in eagerness to how close I feel. I always try to gauge myself in how much closer I am, as I've said numerous times before, and when I reach a mental checkpoint, it just feels that much more rewarding.

My gem is now beating like a rock n roll drum, it feeling very close to a sledgehammer being hit into my belly over and over. However, there looks to be an end to the forest up ahead so maybe I'm getting close. I keep moving but the pulsing then slows down dramatically. The more I move to the forest edge, the more it slows until it just fades completely when I reach the treeline. I sigh, wondering what in the heck I'm supposed to do now, but when I look up from the ground, I see my answer.

Tall, jagged, grey rock spires reach out of the ground like a bad clump of the gem equivalent of weeds. The ground coming from the area looks like the color was just leeched out, making it a bland grey as a result. Machines with robotic spider legs and heptagon shaped heads are attached randomly to different spots on the inner walls. Platoons of tall and very muscular Amethysts trot about the place in the organized structure you'd see at any other military base across the country. This all confirms to me that I'm right where I need to be. The Prime Kindergarten, in all it's monochromatic glory.

I know that Pink will come back to here after she and Pearl are

done exploring Earth so I'll just have to go inside, find a place to hide, then just play the waiting game. Peeking out of the forest, I look both ways even though I know it's not a city street, and then walk at a moderate pace towards the v-shaped entryway. I pause and stoop around the corner when I'm at the gate and look to see if any Amethysts are lingering near me. It's not my intention to get caught but if I do, I won't be afraid to release all of my strength on them.

I find none and taking a deep breath, go around the corner and dash inside the Kindergarten. It's just I remember it when Amethyst showed me the first time. The place is more lively now because, well, it should be obvious at this point. I was pretty nervous first going in, but now that I hear thunder rumbling and rain beginning to pour down, I'm more anxious to find a hiding spot. If I were spotted out in the downpour with the clothes I'm wearing, I'd stick out like a Lapis Lazuli in a room full of Peridots or vice versa.

My gaze becomes rushed and sporadic, matching my desperation to the letter. Fortunately, my gaze falls upon an Amethyst birth hole on my near right, so I quickly rush over and cozy on up inside. My clothes are already drenched from the sudden downpour, sticking to my skin like plastic wrap. Even though I'm not particularly cold, I still find myself shivering. In the meantime, I get as comfortable as I can and get to waiting, because I have no doubt it'll be awhile.

~~ Mere Minutes Later..... ~~

Pink Diamond (as Rose Quartz)'s P.O.V

I'm glad my Pearl showed me the wonders of Earth. The beautiful scenery, the plants, the insects, and even the organic life. Up until previously, I had never known that life had preexisted on this planet before I was given it by White. Now that I know more about the planet though, I feel this deep guilt and regret about what I've wrought upon these unknowing people. The Kindergartens and colonization efforts will wipe them and it'll be all on my conscious. I just can't let that happen.

It's started to 'rain', as Pearl calls it, so we've made our way back to the Prime Kindergarten. Entering back through the tall and vast entryway, I now have a very different perspective of the area. I thought that the colonization was making life from nothing, but now I've seen that creating life by taking it from other preexisting lifeforms. Pearl said that she shouldn't have shown me this, but I disagreed and replied that it was good that I saw this. Otherwise, I'd be no different than Yellow or Blue, who probably would erase life on their colonies in the blink of an eye.

I need to get back up to the moonbase and process all this, so that's exactly where we are headed now. However, as we pass by the Amethyst-shaped holes in the walls, I hear the faintest of breathing. I know it's not mine on Pearl's because she's been by me the whole time. I walk closer and listen, trying to pinpoint where it's coming from. After a few holes prove to have nothing, I lean down and see an unexpected shape inside. It looks to be a human, dressed in strange cloth of varying color, a mix of yellow and red on his upper body and blue on his lower body. As I study the human, I notice it shiver and immediately feel bad for it. It appears to be cold and scared and I can't blame it to be honest. If I was in its place and wandered into a place like the Kindergarten, I would probably feel the same way.

"What is it, my Diamond?" Pearl asks, crouching next to me.

"It's a small human, Pearl" I say, directing her attention to it.

It's so small and cute looking, I can't help but smile and feel warm inside.

"How did a human find its way inside here?" Pearl questions, confusion clear in her voice.

"I don't know" I reply, "But I don't wish to just leave it here in the 'rain'".

Pearl looks over with confusion still present on her face.

"What are you suggesting, my Diamond?" She asks.

"I wish to take it to the moon base with us" I answer her, "The environment in the Kindergarten isn't good for it and I know I can keep it safe where I can watch over it."

"If it is what you wish, I will support it" Pearl nods.

"Thank you, Pearl" I smile at her.

I reach down and am about to grab the small human when Pearl somehow knocks it out with a sudden spear. I glare at her sudden use of violence but sigh, shake my head, and scoop the little thing up into my arms anyway. I then clutch the human to my chest and rush over to the Warp Pad that waits a bit deeper inside the Kindergarten. When I reach it, I step on and my Pearl, having caught up, steps on alongside me. The Warp Stream then whisks the now three of us back up to the moon base. As we're in-transit though, I can't help but look down and wonder.

Where did you come from, little one?

Steven's P.O.V

I swear, my head feels like it was hit with a golf club. My recollection of how that pain came about is brief, starting with the knowledge that I was in the Amethyst hole and heard some voices. The strange thing was that the voices were spot on of Rose Quartz and Pearl, so really, I don't know why I didn't crawl outta the confined space and saved myself the apparent head trauma. Mind you, I wasn't aware that I would be brutalized if I stayed, but that's what ended up happening. I think the reason I was so stationary was the fact that I was just tired from all the walking, running, and searching. Even though I'm half gem, my human half is still on the younger side and doesn't quite have the strength to engage in all this rigorous physical activity. A diet on berries certainly doesn't help either, but it's better than starving to death, that's all I'm saying.

Now, the reason I bring up all this talk is because I was forcibly knocked unconscious by it. Throughout the length of my asleep state, questions bounced through my head like particles in a microwave. Who did this to me? Where have they taken me? Are

they friendly? Are they hostile? And when do I stop pestering myself with these questions and wake up to figure them out like a normal diamond-human hybrid? I don't have the patience or the time to answer them, at least I think so, so the end decision is to just push the pain to the back of my mind like a leaf blower and face whatever situation is happening around me at this very moment.

Works either way, though, because a matter of who knows how many seconds later, I open my eyes and shift my body uncomfortably. With little time, I recognize that I'm lying on my side, facing a wall in a rather dimly lit room. Immediately, I shift myself so that I'm now flat on my back, too pained from sleeping on my side to remain that way any longer. Unfortunately, the pain from my head wound returns as well. But, I can't worry about that right now. I gotta find out where I am and seek down Pink Diamond.

Groaning, I do my best to sit up. The room I'm in doesn't have the best lighting, so it's not real easy for me to see. However, after I sit for a bit and let my eyes adjust, I can see the outline of some spiraling stairs on the exact opposite side of the room. Something clicks in my mind once I make the connection. The last place I remember stairs like those in front of me is when I visited the moonbase so long ago. The placement is close enough to what I recall, so logic dictates that I'm in the same place. Then, I hear some voices coming from the levels above me. They match Pink and Pearl's voices from the Kindergarten, so they must be up stairs! My excitement grows because I'm ever so close and all that stands in my way are some easily overcoming steps! Time to go introduce myself!

I slowly ease up off the hard floor, my back muscles crying out in agony. I crack my arms, shoulders, neck, and fingers to relieve some of the pent up stiffness, then march on over to the steps. I pass by the observation orb on the way, the memory of running into Lapis on the moonbase briefly flashing through my mind. Once I make the first step onto the floating stairs though, I feel some major nostalgia coming on. I soldier on forward anyway, hopping up the steps in a very child-like manner. As I keep going up and up in a

very winding circle pattern, feelings of deja vu spark in my mind and heart, reminding me of the time when Peridot showed me the colonization plan and the time afterwards when the Ruby Squad brought us here when Amethyst pretended to be Jasper. Ah, the old days. I was so ignorant and oblivious back then. Glad I'm not like that anymore though, otherwise I wouldn't even be in this situation right now.

I don't keep track of how long it took, but eventually I reach the top of the steps and hear the voices grow to the loudest they've ever been. Not like they're screaming or whatever, but since I was down so low a bit ago, the level of audacity was majorly reduced compared to where I am currently. Instead of strutting into the Diamond Control Room though, I pause and crouch on the last few steps. I do my best to flatten myself against where the steps meets the opening in the floor and listen. Barging in there like I am would be as stupid as charging a group of armed thugs bare-handed. I'm gonna eavesdrop and see if I can gather some information on where am I as far as the events that have transpired. That way, I can better change my plan to cause an interruption in the war commencement.

"My Diamond, that human is a liability! Not to mention the fact that he's very suspicious!" Pearl's voice says with frustration, making me narrow my eyes in annoyance.

"Pearl, the fact that he found his way into the Kindergarten doesn't make him a threat. The human forest is exceedingly close to the outer perimeter of the Prime Kindergarten, so the chances are pretty high" Pink's voice calmly responds.

"Even so, I don't like that you brought him here! What's going to happen when it wakes up? It'll find out that the moonbase isn't something that their species usually sees around Earth and, because of their infuriating sense of curiosity, the human will call it's friends here to take over the base!" Pearl protests insistently.

"Calm yourself, my Pearl. I think you're overthinking and overreacting about this human. They're fun and friendly little things and the one I have downstairs has got to be the cutest I've ever seen by far. If we're really going to go through with this war, I want it to be spared from the potential chaos and violence that will ensue.

Besides, they are the reason I decided to do this, Pearl. I don't want this species to suffer because of a preordained colonization plan handed to me by Blue and Yellow. I want these humans to be as free as we will once the war ends" Pink Diamond explains.

"Alright, but if the human wakes up and becomes hostile in any way, I will use my spear" Pearl promises.

"No, you won't. Since you've proven to me that you can't handle a spear, I gave you those two sabers. And, remember that I specifically want you to only use them on Homeworld threats. This human is not part of that group" Pink states firmly.

"My Diamond..." Pearl begins to protest again.

"No, Pearl. That is final. If we lower ourselves to killing any lifeforms that cross our path, then how are we any different from the other Diamonds? I want us to be better than them and since I was given this world, I decide what happens to everything and anything that resides on it" The youngest Diamond elaborates.

I pause from listening for a second and sit back to reflect on what I just heard. It stuns me because what Pink said mere moments ago is very contradictory to her whole ideology of individualism and breaking away from her responsibilities that came with the colonization. She's all about not wanting to rule over the Earth, but Pink spoke very condescendingly a second ago, saying how things on Earth can happen because she'll allow them too. Seems like a personality change problem if you ask me. Remember when Rose told Pearl "if this is truly my world, I wanna give it to the Crystal Gems"? Yet another example of how Pink's emotions and logic clashed so unceremoniously.

The two keep talking but I've heard enough. My frustration and resentment towards Pink's attitude is rising and that in turn is making me conflict internally about how I should proceed. Mind you, I'm still going up there, but my actions when I do so can go a couple of ways. Either obscenely hateful and loudly expressive or quiet and calm with sprinkles of patience. In my heart and mind, I know the second option is the best, and probably most mature option, but it's still hard to get into that mindset when you have

Pink spouting her nonsense right above you. Exhaling in frustration, I clench both sides of my head and shake it back and forth ferociously to rid myself of any negative emotions. It takes some intense teeth gritting and some deep breaths to work, but it gets the job done. Now I just gotta go up and introduce myself, in a nice and innocent way of course because I can't have Pink or Pearl knowing why I'm here. At least not yet.

"Hello? Is someone up here?" I call up into the room, beginning my falsely innocent act.

The conversation immediately halts.

"Yes, little one. Please come up. Don't be afraid, we won't hurt you" Pink calls back.

I walk slowly up the last of the steps and into the Diamond Control Room. I make it seem like the setting is all new and strange to me with some wide eyes and frequent head spins, even though I've obviously seen this all before. Pink Diamond and Pearl stand behind the control room chair, their eyes glued to me in wonder. I pause in my step and my gaze falls primarily on Pink, tilting my head and narrowing my eyes to make her think that I'm curious about her. Without a hint of skepticism, Pink then walks in my direction and kneels down when she's right in front of me.

"I'm so glad you're awake, little human" Pink says happily, placing her gloved hands on both sides of my face, "You were asleep for so long, I thought you'd never wake up".

"I'm sorry, miss, but how long was I out?" I ask.

"From what my holoscreens calculate, it's been five Earth days" Pink answers.

Genuine shock hits me. Five days!? How much has happened in that time that I couldn't interfere with?! This is bad! As I shake my head in disbelief, I notice Pink sparing a glare for Pearl, who looks down ashamed. She must've been why I was knocked out. She'll regret that later.

"Wow, that's a long time. But, Ms. Pink Lady, could you help tell me where I am? And who you are? And who she is?" I ask, pointing to Pearl at the end.

Pink smiles at my innocence, clearly falling for it.

"Oh, you're so cute and small, young human. My name is Pink Diamond and this is my Pearl. She's a type of servant, you could say, but compared to other servants, my Pearl's more self conscious and is able to think on her own. What you see around you is called the Moonbase, which serves as a sort of a home away from home and observation point for me to watch over your planet. Now, if you don't mind me asking, what's your name, little one?" Pink asks in return.

"Steven" I reply simply.

"And how did you end up in that Kindergarten?" Pink questions.

"If you mean that scary mountain area that's all grey, the reason was that I was running away from home. My family was mean to me and it was just too hard trying to be around them. They just didn't understand me and I didn't want to live with that anymore" I say somewhat truthfully.

I can see in Pink's eyes that with my words, she sees a lot of herself in me. It hits home hard enough with her to have Pink come forward and pull me in for a hug. Personally, it feels uncomfortable and savory at the same time because I never got to hug my mother before. Even though I know she's fake, it still holds something close in my heart.

"I'm so sorry, Steven" Pink says, sniffling a little bit, "An innocent little thing like you should never have to go through something that heinous. It's so heartbreaking for me, you have no idea. My family was just like that with me, so I know exactly how you feel. If you'd like, I'll take care of you, Steven. I know it sounds so sudden, especially since we just met, but I can't help but feel like I was meant to find you".

Pink's more right than she knows.

"I really would like that, Pink" I say, smiling before my stomach growls.

The sound makes both Pink and Pearl jump slightly, probably because they've heard it before. Now that I think about it, I do feel quite famished. Being knocked out for five days really stretched how long I could go without eating.

"Oh my, what was that, Steven?" Pink asks, sounding more curious than scared.

"That was my stomach. It tells me that I'm hungry and need food" I tell her.

"What is this 'food'?" She questions curiously.

"Well, food is an essential part of living for humans, Ms. Diamond. We need food because our bodies absorb energy from it and, in turn, it keeps us alive and healthy. When we go without food for too long though, we start to grow weak and eventually die. From that stomach rumbling we just heard, I'd guess that I'm close to the 'feeling weak' stage" I explain.

"Oh my, well that's not good at all" Pink remarks, releasing me from the hug and standing up, "Stay here, young Steven and I'll go get you some food. I've seen some examples of what humans eat, so I shouldn't have much trouble finding something for you. Pearl, keep Steven company. I'll be back soon".

"Yes, my Diamond" Pearl responds obediently.

Pink then nods and trots away from me, going down the stairs and out of sight. My guess is that she's going for a Warp Pad and if the sound of the Warp Stream activating is any sign, I'd say I'm spot on. But, now she's gone and I'm left with Pearl, who, due to my past incidents with, gives me feelings of uneasiness. Looking at Pearl right now, she's dressed only slightly different than back in the present. The only major differences are the longer hair and the bit of a shawl draped over both of her shoulders. Oh, and the twin swords which are currently being pointed at me.

"Listen here, human. I know you didn't come across the Kindergarten by mere happenstance. Tell me why you're really here, or so help me, I'll cut you down myself" Pearl threatens.

I put on a scared look, though I'm more annoyed if anything, and flit my eyes back and forth as Pearl walks towards me with her swords.

"It's just like I told Ms. Diamond, Pearl. Nothing more, nothing less" I reply, very wary of the pointed tips coming ever more closer.

"I wish I could believe that, human. But I can't risk anything or anyone putting my Diamond in danger, least of all you. Too much is going on right now and I don't need you adding to list of problems that we'll have to deal with" Pearl says, sounding a bit more considerate.

"Look, lady, my dad told me to stay away from strangers with sharp pointy things. I mean you and Pink no harm, but if you do try to hurt me for whatever reason, don't think I won't defend myself" I counter, dead serious.

This was apparently too hostile for Pearl because once I finish that sentence, she swings her swords at me. I duck to the left to dodge the first then knock the other blade to the side with my forearm. This throws Pearl off balance and gives me time to back up. It doesn't take her long to recover though and Pearl comes back at me. What followed was a series of repeated strikes from her and many hopping backwards while leaning out of the way tactics from me. From the look on her face, Pearl is clearly surprised at how easily I fend her off. Looks like that training earlier in my life is really paying off now.

Pearl's attacks start to become more vicious, showing that she's getting irritated. Like me, she's clearly wanting to wrap this all up. I quite agree and know exactly how to do it. When Pearl comes in for another sword swing, I surprise her by clamping my hand over the blade and yanking her forward to get an equally strong hold on the other sword. Pearl struggles to pull away, but she's unable to do anything as I tighten my grip on the blades and kick her in the stomach, sending her sprawling across the floor. I then let the

sabers drop to the ground and watch as Pearl stands back up. She's really angry now and goes to run at me, but then a familiar voice causes her to stop in her tracks.

"I'm back!" Pink calls, her footsteps echoing as she trots up the stairs.

When the Diamond emerges from below, she's carrying an old-fashioned bowl made out of plant reeds, the interior filled with some grapes, some cheese, and a bit of bread. I'm amazed at how she came across such delicacies, but before I'm able to ask, Pink inquires about the situation she's walked into.

"Is everything going alright?" She asks, calmly walking over.

"Oh yes" I reply, walking up to meet her as Pearl goes to pick up her sabers, "Your servant here was just showing me how to use her swords".

Pink smiles, but when I look over my shoulder, I see Pearl glare at me. We both know I made that up, but she stays silent about it. Probably because I saved her from a lengthy lecture. But, needless to say, we're both not gonna be on the best of terms while I'm here.

"Oh well, that's good" Pink muses, handing me the bowl.

I graciously accept it and sit down with my back against the backside of the throne. Pink sits on my right and Pearl sits a little bit off to my left, though she's sure to keep her distance. Letting my hunger take over, I dig in to the food, scarfing it all down at an unhealthy pace. I was really hungry though, so don't blame me. When it's all gone not too much later and I'm swallowing the last bit of cheese, Pink asks me something.

"Now that you're fed, young Steven, I was wondering if you'd like to accompany me to something?" The Diamond asks.

"And what would that be, Pink?" I ask back.

"A rally. A rally to spark the fire and let the flames of war eradicate the Homeworld Gems" She replies with utmost confidence.

Rushing Into the Unknown

Pink Diamond's P.O.V

"So what's so special about this meeting of yours, Pink?" The cute little human asks, looking sideways at me.

I smile at his adorableness.

"It's a call for rebellion, Steven. The gems, like my Pearl here, were all created for one specific purpose in life. Those down below on your planet were created to serve me, but that's not what I want. Each and every one of them is their own person and they should be able to choose their own destiny, not to have it predetermined by me. I must go down to Earth and inspire them to reject their chosen purposes" I explain.

"Hmm. And how do you plan on doing that?" Steven also asks.

"My Diamond is not here to answer all your questions, human" Pearl says flatly.

Steven pouts and I look over to frown at my Pearl. She looks ashamed, as she should after making such a remark, but I turn back to Steven.

"Well, tiny one, my plan is very simple. I have a secondary persona by the name of Rose Quartz, a name known to be a symbol of hope and freedom amongst the Homeworld Gems. With this persona, I will meet with a large collection of these Gems and convince them to be their own people. What I fear about that though is the possibility of Yellow and Blue finding out" I reply, my voice

becoming dreadful at the end.

"So.... I take it Yellow and Blue are like your parents?" The human questions.

"Not really, but they are still my family" I sigh, "You see, the difference between me and them, Steven, is that they don't care about the life on their planets. They rule planets much like Earth, but with their whole 'colonization process', any life is completely annihilated. Both have pressured me to do the same with your world, but I've refused thus far. I told them that I didn't want to rule Earth anymore, but Yellow and Blue insisted that I 'finish what I started'. We've argued many times, but I still continue to fight. That is why this movement of creating allies from these Gems is so important. If need be, they'll be helpful if Yellow or Blue decide to send their own armies against the humans".

"That sounds awful. I guess your rebellion is really that important" Steven says.

"Yes, it is very much important, Steven. Not just to me, but to all that live and thrive on Earth" I nod, an idea then coming to mind, "And, you know, you could help with it too".

"How?" Steven wonders, looking at me in confusion.

"Stay by my side. I'll protect you from anything Homeworld throws our way" I promise him, "The worst that can happen is that Blue and Yellow get fed up with my constant refusals and try to take this planet from me. In that case, a probable invasion would occur, but with our own army of Earth-made Gems, we'd stand a fighting chance. I sincerely hope it doesn't have to come to that, but I'm ready to consider it if the three of us here are able to make it happen".

"Hmm....ok" Steven replies, his lips a tight line. "I'll help, but only if you promise me something".

Pearl glares at him, but I hold up a hand to silence her.

"And what would that be?" I ask kindly.

"To talk it out with them as much as you can before resorting to violence. I've seen way too much of it already in my lifetime and I don't think you or I want any more of it to begin with" Steven says seriously, making direct eye contact with me.

In his eyes, I find genuine concern for not just me, but his people too. Oh, he's so much like me, it's unbelievable!

"Alright" I say, grinning proudly, "I promise".

Steven nods in satisfaction and looks down at the floor. So begins an uncomfortable period of silence for the three of us. Even so, I can't help but put my attention towards Steven. He fascinates me in ways I never thought I would find in a human. Yellow always referred to them as 'organics', like they have no name and therefore no meaning, but since when do I ever listen to what she has to say? Whatever the case is, I know I must keep him and his people safe from their clutches. Even if I have to start a war to do it.

Steven then gets up and walks patiently over to the moonbase dome. I can't tell since he's facing away from me, but knowing humans, the boy is probably curious as to what lies beyond the dome. He puts his hand almost fondly onto the glass and doesn't move a muscle, showing that he's deep in observation. I wanna leave him to his curiosity, but something inside me spurs me to get up and walk over to stand beside him, which I what I end up doing anyway. Maybe it's because I don't want Steven to feel like he's alone. His story is tragically similar to mine and I want him to understand that he's not by himself. From the sounds of it, he's been fighting just like I have from a pretty early start. With an arm placed carefully around his back and a curious/surprised look from him, I smile and let him know non-verbally that I'll be here for him. Us fighters have to stick together.

"Magnificent, isn't it?" I say, directing his attention back where it was before.

"Yes, hehe, it is quite something" Steven remarks, peering at his planet, which is now smaller looking in size because of our location on the moonbase.

Personally, I think the view is much better than anything viewed on a holoscreen. It's like a reverse image of if you're standing on the planet's surface looking up at the moon.

"I've never had a view like this before" Steven continues, his eyes strangely looking to the left two times in a row.

I ignore it though, because it's probably just some human quirk that means nothing.

"I must say, Steven, that out of all the humans I've come to know, you're the most interesting of them all" I say, keeping my gaze half on Earth and half on him.

"That's very kind of you to say, Pink" He responds, looking at me with a smile for a moment before looking back out the dome, "I just wish my parents could me now".

"Doubtful. Humans require an excessive amount of oxygen to survive and the limits of space don't have the leniency to provide such. Plus, space is a vacuum and would turn any human into a frozen cold piece of organic waste" Pearl says unhelpfully.

I notice Steven huff and roll his eyes at the comment.

"I believe now would the best time to go, wouldn't you agree, my Diamond?" Pearl continues, this time with more politeness. I sigh in a near dreadful manner and turn away from the view, gazing at the descending steps leading to the Warp Pad.

"Yes...it would" I grunt, very thin-lipped, "Come along, Steven, we're about to go!".

I soon feel his presence beside me, making me feel slightly more confident about this. I then start trudging towards the steps, Pearl joining us as we get to the opening in the floor. I leave her and Steven to find their way down and instead, let myself drop down to the lowest level of the moonbase. Miraculously, I don't suffer and external cracking, but then I have to wait for my two favorite people to come down those many flights of steps. Sure, they eventually make it down and come into my line of sight again, but

I'm usually not one who's real big on sitting around and not doing anything. Must be why Blue and Yellow can't stand me.

Like I said, Pearl and Steven soon make their way down to my level and together, we all collectively step onto the Warp Pad. Pearl is quick to activate it, sending us via Warp Stream to the Beta Kindergarten. Not sure why meeting them in Beta besides Prime was any better, but you gotta cater your people's needs, I guess. I felt nervous before about doing this, mainly because I'm not a person really big on talking to mass amounts of Gems, but when we touch down in the rocky, light grey habitat of the Beta Kindergarten, I feel my panic rising.

What a great Diamond I am.

Steven's P.O.V

Pink looks ready to quit, send us back to the moon base, and go console herself in someplace quiet and secluded. I can't have that happen for two reasons. One, I need to see how this meeting plays out, for better or for worse, and, two, if Pink is able to do option one, she'll need some outside counseling from yours truly. It pains me greatly to do this, but I take her gloved hand and give it a gentle squeeze, making the monarch jump a little and look down in surprise.

"Don't worry, Pink. Pearl and I will be here the whole time" I lull in a soft voice.

Her eyes flit back and forth a couple of times, but she eventually nods, looking ahead while I catch a glimpse of Pearl surprisingly smiling at me. Guess she liked that I was able to cheer up 'her Diamond'. Whatever, won't matter later on.

"You're right. I got this, Steven" Pink says, partly to herself and partly to me.

A bright glow then blinds me for a second, but it quickly fades, leaving me staring at a now white-dressed Rose Quartz. Looks like she's already grown into it like in Garnet's story. That's just great. She'll certainly stick out now.

"Let's keep moving" Pearl suggests, pointing down the way, "According to the holoscreen, a massive group has gathered in Facet Nine. Best we get there before they all scramble".

"Right, let's go" Pink/Rose says, nodding confidently before taking off at a run.

Pearl and I are quick to fall in line, each of us running to catch up. We move almost in sync now, the tall walls of the Kindergarten flying past us in a near blur. We have to make turns here and there, though I have no idea how Pink is so certain of where she's going. However, it's not something I can really gripe about. After all this is playing right into my hands. I just gotta stick with this act for as long as I can and when the time comes, she'll pay. Not in a overly brutal way though, for those that are wondering. I'm not that heartless.

"We're here" Rose whispers, bringing us all to a halt.

We skid to a stop and marvel at the sight before us. Not even twenty feet ahead of us lies the biggest group of Gems I've ever seen in my life. There's thousands of them, many of them Amethysts, some Jaspers, a Carnelian here and there, a think maybe a Ruby as well, and a fair number of Bismuths. The thing is though that their backs are all pointed at us, so we're coming in unannounced, which is perfectly fine for me. I don't necessarily feel comfortable with a gem crowd this big staring me down either.

"Alright, here's the plan. I'm gonna make the speech from up there" Rose whispers, pointing up to a deactivated gem incubator attached to wall ahead, *"Meanwhile, you guys take shelter in those Amethyst holes. You'll no doubt stand out if you remain here, so those holes will be better cover"*.

Rose then points to some Amethyst birth holes on the tall wall directly to our right. The holes in question are the highest off the ground you can get, but Pearl could no doubt launch me and her up there. Pearl and I share a firm nod and she tells Rose 'good luck' before roughly grabbing my arm and jumping with all her might. She almost reaches the hole, but is able to grasp the edge with her fingers. First thing she does after that though is throw me up into

the hole like a careless shopper throwing groceries in the trunk of their car. I grunt in pain and when Pearl hauls herself up the rest of the way, I shoot her a raised eyebrow which she shrugs off.

I then crawl back to the lip of the hole and sit with my legs dangling over the edge. Pearl, on the other hand, lays down on her stomach and rests her head on her fists. The two of us then wait an impatiently long time before Rose starts. I don't know how, but I see her across the way hopping down onto the Gem Incubator, somehow avoiding detection thus far. However, when she walks to the very tip of the machine, the Amethysts below are fast to notice her presence. They get the others to stop talking and in a matter of minutes, the whole Kindergarten goes eerily quiet. I can tell a lot of gems, especially the Carnelians, are still antsy though.

"Gems of Earth! Hear my call!" Rose begins, "The rulers of Homeworld care nothing for you! They seek to use you only as servants for their expanding empire! I don't! What I see are gems that deserve to decide their own fate, choose their own path, and forge their own destiny! Am I right!?".

A majority of the crowd roars in approval.

"Up there, in her fancy moonbase, Pink Diamond sits and waits to tell us what to do. She thinks that she can control us. She thinks that we can't over power her. She thinks that just because the other Diamonds gave her the Earth that we are supposed to treat her like a goddess. To that, I say no! Pink Diamond doesn't own us and we don't have any obligation to follow her rules!" The disguised Diamond exclaims.

The crowd roars once more, a few even saying things like "down with the Diamonds!" and "I'll follow you, Rose Quartz!". It fills me with dread to hear those things. Rose continues on with her speech, saying things like how special each one of them is, but I instead turn to look at Pearl.

"Why would she purposefully bash herself in front of these gems? I mean, I know they aren't aware of her being Pink Diamond and everything, but isn't that a little backwards way of thinking?" I ask.

"You're right to ask, but keep this in mind, Steven. The best way to divert any suspicion of you being someone you don't want anyone knowing about is to make your target group believe the absolute worst about your other self. My Diamond's just doing what she needs to in order to gain the trust of all these gems" Pearl explains, her tone understanding but her eyes glued to Rose.

"But what if these gems find out somehow? Won't Rose's image be shattered and their trust in her broken?" I ask, my tone subconsciously slipping into a more scheming vibe.

Pearl doesn't pick up on it though and just confirms it for me.

"That's true, but me and her have worked on this before. During the five days that you were sleeping, we've been out and about gathering allies and building up her persona to be likable and appealing. Sure, with the number of gems here, somebody could find out. But the chances are that it'll only be one or two. If it does happen though, we'll do what we need to do. Even if it means shattering them" Pearl replies, her voice slowly escalating to dead serious.

I nod to show I understand, but deep down, I'm feeling my worst fears being confirmed. Shattering any who find out. It plays painfully close and will be on the same course for when the war breaks out. Sighing, I rest my head in my hands and close my eyes in thought, letting the Sun warmly breeze over my face. I begin to think that this will all end in colossal failure, but something interrupts me from my thoughts. I feel the Sun disappear from my, so I open my eyes and look up to see what's wrong. I was not prepared for how bad it would be.

"We got a problem here, Pearl" I say nervously, poking her and pointing towards the sky.

She grunts at me for tearing her attention away from Rose, but when she looks up, her eyes widen and her face develops a fearful expression. My eyes are fixated, but ears hear that down below, the Earth Gems are picking up on it as well and by picking up on it, I mean running away like a herd of buffalo. Pearl then grabs me and together we fall feet-first from the hole, coming in at a roll when we

both hit the ground. We dust ourselves off and Rose floats down next to us. Once she sees it to, all three of us stand with our legs bent and our chests puffed out like we were expecting a fight.

The shadow mostly blocking out the Sun is due to not one but two armships, one conveniently blue-colored and the other even more conveniently yellow-colored. Both ships hover between us and the Moon, leaving room for some sunlight to still work its way in. Looking over, both Rose and Pearl are starting to panic, quite easily matching the mood of the stampede of Earth gems running around the ground trying to hide.

"We gotta get back to the moonbase" Rose calls over all the chaos, "The Diamonds can't know that I'm away!".

"Right! Come on, Steven!" Pearl shouts.

"I'm coming!" I call back, fighting my way through the moving Amethysts.

Through some intense pushing, shoving, and just moving in general, we're able to get some distance back in the direction of the Warp Pad. The three of us are still relatively close to each other, which proved helpful because at one point the crowds grew to forceful that we had to hold onto each other to stick together. Nevertheless, we persevere and trek onward, soldiering our way and retracing our steps, which proved not too difficult because a handful of gems were headed that direction anyway.

After what feels like an eternity of fighting the crowd, I spot a consistent Warp Stream being activated ahead of us. I point it out to Rose and Pearl, who nod and continue to press further. Step after step after step we take and finally, we reach it! We almost have to jump onto it stomach first to get our window out of here, but luckily we make it on and are zooming back towards the moonbase. Almost immediately as we were whisked away, I reminded Rose to shift back to her Diamond form, which she anxiously did.

In the span of half a minute, we touch back down on the moonbase. Right away, I feel an air of authority and tension breeze by me. However, it's not until I notice the two different colored Pearls

standing mere feet in front of us that I really realize how close we came. Pink and Pearl soon take notice of the other two Pearls, each of whom greet Pink with the Diamond salute.

"Pink Diamond, my Diamond requests your presence" Yellow Pearl states.

"And my Diamond requests your presence as well" Blue Pearl says softly.

It's then when Pink, Pearl, and I know just how bad things got for us just now. Forget trying to meet with a group of a thousand Earth gems. Pink just found herself and all of us in a very tense situation that is not looking good. Blue and Yellow Diamond are here.

And by my guess, they are not happy.

Pink Diamond's P.O.V

"So be it then" I sigh, my voice dragged down by wholesome servings of dread and nervousness.

The Pearls remain stationary, holding the Diamond salute while wearing blank expressions. They obviously expect me to follow them, even though I'm a Diamond and thereby higher than them, but I shouldn't get testy or condescending now. Looking behind me, I see Steven standing there with confusion as curiosity dotting his face.

"Don't worry, little one" I console him, "I'll be back shortly. I just need to meet with my fellow Diamonds about a personal matter".

This seems to give him some comfort, so I smile and begin walking after Blue and Yellow's Pearls. In order to keep up appearances too, I painstakingly tell my Pearl to 'follow me' as any Diamond would do. It's a measure only so the other Pearls don't get suspicious and tell Yellow or Blue. That's the last thing I or the rebellion needs. Something I worry about though is if they already suspect. What other reason would they have to be waiting near the Warp Pad in the first place? Either that or due to my usual behavior of not listening to the Diamonds, they've anticipated that I went down to

Earth even though I was instructed not to. If that's the case, I guess I'm growing predictable. However, it's still cause for caution, so from now on, I'll have to be more timely on knowing when the Diamonds ever decide to show up.

The two Pearls lead me and my Pearl up the winding circular staircase that stretches on upward forever until stopping at the Diamond Control Room, which is more than likely where Blue and Yellow are impatiently tapping their feet for my arrival. It's a painfully long time before our little escort reaches the top, which reminds me why I like jumping off the sides of the stairs instead of using them. Stairs just suck, period.

"Pink! Where have you been?" The all too familiar voice of Blue Diamond asks with frustration.

Now that we've reached the end of those retched stairs, I'm able to look up and see the expected angry form of Blue standing tall and menacing. She has her hood on again, which figures cause she really likes that thing. Yellow stands next to her, though judging by her expression and her hands-behind-the-back posture, it's clear that she has no interest being here. Sighing and silently shaking my head, I leave the Pearls behind and walk towards Blue.

"I was busy with something" I tell her with annoyance.

Blue raises an eyebrow questioningly.

"Like what? Because to me, it wasn't something important enough that couldn't be handled here, otherwise I wouldn't have to criticize you for not being here on time" My hooded Diamond sister points out, crossing her arms disapprovingly.

"Your point being?" I retort, stopping in front of her. Out of the corner of my eye, I notice Pearl waiting alongside the others off at the east end of the room, no doubt giving us Diamonds our space.

"My point..." Blue continues, leaning forward to get closer to me, "...is that you fail to once again understand the sheer importance of being consistent. The responsibilities of being a Diamond are vast and numerous, but the most easy to remember is to be as

continually reliable as possible. If you can do that, your colony will profit much greater, especially with the changes that appear more frequently and noticeably once the colonization picks up speed".

"Easy for you to say, you've gone through this plenty of times. I don't even want to run this colony any longer" I half mumble to myself.

"I heard that, Pink" Blue snaps, "Don't think that I can't hear you. What disappoints me and Yellow most is how you act, especially in regards to this 'rebellion' on your colony. Should I remind her of incompetency, Yellow?".

"Yes" Yellow responds, "Let her know".

Blue nods and then fixes her burning gaze back on me.

"You begged us for a colony of your own and now all you want to do is be rid of it. First there were too many organics, and then their cities were too difficult to dismantle, and now these Crystal Gems. We're tired of your excuses, Pink" Blue growls.

I draw my lips into a thin line.

"This 'Rose Quartz' can't hurt you. You can't be swayed by a few unruly gems" Blue continues.

I open my mouth to protest but she shuts me down with a raised hand.

"Enough!" Blue demands, but then her voice softens and her hand lifts my chin up to look up at her, "You have to understand that you..are a Diamond. Everyone on this planet is looking to you. You don't even have to do anything. Just smile and wave, let everyone know that you're unfazed about this little 'uprising'. Your gems will fall into line and this colony will be completed".

Blue then straightens up and walks over to Yellow, whispering some things into her ear before walking the opposite end of the room. Her Pearl waddles after her and stops right by her feet as Blue summons her ship's bubble around her and floats out of the dome into her ship. The blue arm then flies away towards Earth while

Yellow follows her footsteps. As she passes me though, she spares me only a fleeting glance of disappointment. Soon enough, just like Blue, Yellow and her Pearl have disappeared into their ship too and have flown away, only not towards Earth this time.

The room is the quietest it's ever been and for the first time in forever, I'm having trouble finding a way to see the positive side to this.

I sit with my elbows on my knees, my chin resting in between my fists. It's been a great deal of hours since my heated conversation with Blue and it's also been hard to let go of anything she said. If I'm to be perfectly honest, I'm feeling a bit down about it and that then translate to how I think the rebellion should continue. Confliction and emotional turmoil are most dominantly pulsing in my Gem, making it hard to think of anything else in a less than optimistic fashion.

The cute little human, Steven, sits on my right side, his body contorted into a state very similar to mine. He must feel the same way about this as me, even though the Diamonds are nothing of a concern to him. Still though, he appears troubled deeply by something and I would love nothing more than to ask him about it, but I doubt that either of us are really in the mood to talk about it. Sighing, I look over to my left and see Pearl match my gaze with her own. I find in her eyes the worry of a protector, but also concern. Since she's been around me for so long, Pearl's grown very close and knows me better than even the Diamonds themselves, which is actually no surprise because of how little time I really spent with any of them back on Homeworld. But in her eyes, I see a reflection of what I struggle with myself: worry for the future and concern for how the rebellion will carry on.

Something must happen though, there's no denying that. Pearl and I have come too far down this path to simply quit and admit our wrongdoings to Blue, Yellow, and White. I'd never leave 'that room' back in 'the Tower' if they ever got wind of it and Pearl would most

certainly be shattered. By their standards, this would fall under the category of utmost treason and the 'neglecting of your duties as a Diamond'. Yellow loved to pound that into my head whenever she had the chance. But, if I'm able to convince myself that there's something that can help us win, it must be a move so seismic that even those on Homeworld feel it. The Crystal Gems would have to rise up more than ever before with numbers greater than all the colonies combined and outlast anything that the combined forces of White, Blue, and Yellow could throw at us. Luckily, an idea pops into my mind and I have a good idea of where to start.

"Pearl" I say, lifting my chin up and looking directly at her, "We're going to have to advance on the Sky Arena".

Pearl's eyes widen and her mouth opens in shock.

"A-Are you sure?" She stutters nervously, "That's Homeworld diplomatic territory and it'd be just the three of us".

"Two" I correct, lowering my voice so Steven can't hear, "I don't want to drag him into this. But think about it like this, Pearl: if we don't make a move soon, our followers and supporters down on the surface will begin to grow suspicious. They must never find out the truth, so covering our tracks as best we can must remain a top priority. Now, are you with me, or not?".

Pearl steals a quick glance over at Steven and nods.

"Good. Now let's get to it" I conclude, standing up.

Pearl does the same and readies her twin sabers for combat. Taking a deep breath, I concentrate and rotate my Gem once more, feeling my form alter into the smaller and thicker alteration of Rose Quartz. My form settles finally and I take a look at Steven before we go. He's frowning with curiosity, probably wondering where we'll be going.

"Steven, my darling, I don't wish that you be harmed in any shape or form. You're too precious and cuddly for that. So, with that in mind, I ask that you stay here where it's safe. Pearl and I have to do something of the highest importance and it is very dangerous" I tell

him.

I almost expect him to argue and protest that he'd like to come along, but surprisingly, he nods his head in agreement.

"Alright, I'll stay" Steven says, not moving from his spot, "Just..be careful, ok?".

"Always" I say, smiling and winking at him before turning around and following Pearl towards the steps.

I go over the side, of course, and wait for Pearl as she trots down the steps in a more hurried fashion than usual. I don't entirely care how long it took, but needless to say that soon enough she got down to my level. The pair of us then step onto the Warp Pad and the Warp Stream lifts us up to take us where I envisioned. The Stream pushes us along at a nice quick pace and we're just as quick to land not that later. Stepping off the Pad, I see out target hovering in midair just a bit ahead of us.

The Diamond Sky Arena, meant for battles between Gems to gain their Diamond's favor upon victory. Failure meant shattering, according to the Diamonds, but I've always felt that too harsh. As a matter of fact, I never liked the Arena to begin with, but yet I still wound up here today, so not much I can do about it. A large number of Gems are gathered inside the Arena, forming a tightly-knit circle around a medium blue palanquin. Looks like I was right, Blue did come here after our talk. Well, I'll have to get rid of these Gems best I can, first off with a scare tactic but if that fails, then a sword fight even though I don't have a sword.

"Ready?" I whisper to Pearl.

She nods and together, we both jump off the cliff we stood on and fall down into the Arena below. I'm at first worried I might injure myself from the fall but as we near the Arena floor, I feel myself hover a bit in the air like the Arena itself. This newfound ability helps us touch down quietly, but then Pearl and I transition to moving stealthily through the clouds festering in the air around us. In order to scare these Gems, we'll have to jump out and surprise them with force, but the right surprise requires the right moment.

Luckily, that moment comes around quicker that I thought because the sound of a minor commotion starts up, so I take it as our cue to enter.

"Blue Diamond, leave this planet! This colony will not be completed!" I call out.

Voices are heard talking. They're confused. They're worried. Now is the time, so I signal Pearl and we jump out of the clouds and land near the edge of the crowd.

"We are the Crystal Gems!" Pearl and I say in unison.

So many things happen so quickly after that. Blue Diamond's palanquin unfolds its legs and crawls away and multiple Gems come charging at us. Pearl is faster than me though and slices through each of them with ease, not shattering them but still downing them. A trio of Rubie's then fuse into a larger form and come close to striking me, but I just grin and watch Pearl expertly slice through them as well. Only two of the three are downed though and the last one makes a very bold move.

The Ruby dives in front of Pearl before she can down the Sapphire that Blue Diamond was previously talking with. The two are then able to fuse! It's unheard off, even to me! Their merged form is magnificent, having a blue and red mixed skin color, three eyes, and a stronger build. Pearl looks stunned by the fusion too, but then goes to try and strike it. I stop her with my hand on her arm before she can do so though. I just can't let her destroy something so unique. Our hesitation though was a bad idea because the rest of Blue Diamond's Gems have begun to close in on us. The only reasonable course of action now is to flee, so I hold onto Pearl and jump as best I can.

My leap sends Pearl and I into the air for a second but then, like before, we begin to free-fall down again. This time, we're headed down into a humongous collection of what I believe the humans call 'trees'. Our landing is a bit more rough this time, but it's nothing that cracks or shatters us, so all in all, a success. I'm a bit unsure of where to go at the moment, but now I can't help but rant on about unbelievable that fusion was. The two of us wander far

out into the trees but at one point, I can't help myself to stop and fully revel in what I just witnessed a second ago. How many other Gems could do that? Why had I not heard of something like this before?

I'm so intrigued by it. Then, out of the blue, Pearl picks me up and tries to unlock a fusion with me. It doesn't work though and we up tumbling backwards into the leaves. Pearl then apologizes profusely about her apparent inappropriate actions but I calm her down and let her know that it's alright. I then offer her a hand up and our forms begin to glow and blend together. Our emotions must be in almost perfect synchronization. Almost, because when we're almost fused, her and my form split apart, sending us each in the opposite direction of each other. I'm a bit dazed and confused by it, but then some rustling in the trees off to our right makes Pearl stand up and walk over with sabers drawn. Pearl disappears behind the foliage, but I follow after her a second later. Once I peek out from behind the leaves though, I see someone that I'd thought to see again so soon.

"W-We didn't mean to fuse!" The Ruby-Sapphire fusion cries out, cowering back from Pearl's saber, "We'll unfuse! We'll...We'll..".

The fusion trails off when it notices me emerge from the brush. It seems to be in shock seeing me, meaning that word of my rebellion has truly spread far by this point. The fusion then wonders how I'm not disgusted by her. I can only smile at her innocence.

"Who cares about what I think? What you think is much more important" I say.

The fusion seems confused by this, as if neither parts of it never got to think for themselves before. It's very uncertain too because then it asks me questions that I never thought anyone would ask me, wondering if I knew why the Ruby acted the way she did and why the Sapphire acted the way she did. In response, I close her hands together and tell her to never question who she is. She seems to gain some certainty from that and I look at Pearl with a smile, thinking that we might have a new contender for the Crystal Gems. I then look back at the fusion and with my hands on my hips, I give her my introduction into the rebellion.

"Welcome to Earth!" I tell the fusion with a smile.

Unorthodox Methods of Help

Steven's P.O.V

You know, I can't believe that Pink actually thought I'd stay put. It just goes to show how much she doesn't know me. That and I have an agenda to fulfill. Especially after having a front row seat to her argument with Blue Diamond. It's clear now by the looks of things that Pink's not going to stop her actions by mere persuasion and kinds words on my part. Stopping this war will require a more straightforward and, personally, less desirable method. When there's a fire rising, combat with your own tender flame. If Pink's gonna have her rebellion, I will have my own as well.

Unbeknownst to her or Pearl, I stand on the large hunk of rock that serves as the gateway between Earth and Homeworld, the Galaxy Warp. It was little trouble getting here, the moonbase having a near-direct connection with the Pad. What does give me reason to pause and to have waited for the past thirty minutes, is if I'm entirely one hundred percent sure about doing this. What I have planned is on a magnitude that I've never conceived before and will certainly be challenging to accomplish. But, as I come to my final thoughts this very minute, I do believe that this is how it must be done.

There's no turning back now.

I move to step on the larger-than-normal Warp Pad, but then suddenly pause. Feeling this sharp and radiating pain in my whole body, I fall to one knee and grit my teeth while clenching my fists. I've felt pain before, but this rivals anything I've experienced previously. I'm fortunate enough though because it disappears almost as soon as it first appeared. Taking some much needed breaths, I run a hand along my forehead but then notice something

strange going with the other. For a brief couple of seconds, while turning my hand over and around, it becomes see through and seems to fade in and out of reality.

Fear seizes me like a damp undershirt. The timeline's getting altered so much that I'm beginning to disappear from existence. I guess I've gotta hurry before I run out of time and fade out completely before I'm able to stop this mass genocide. I get up from my kneeling position and hurry onto the Galaxy Warp, envisioning the tall spires of Homeworld. The Warp Stream then whisks me up, up, and away. Off to Homeworld I go! Because out of everything, one thing is for certain. If you have to fight against someone who's gathering allies, find some allies of your own.

Mine will be in the form of one Peridot and one Lapis Lazuli.

~~ Three Days Later... ~~

Rose/Pink's P.O.V

"Are you sure about this, Pearl?" I ask.

"Yes, I am my Di- Rose" She replies, almost slipping up.

My breath hitches and I look to see if Garnet caught on. The fusion walks as casual as always, so I guess not. I sigh in relief, shaking my head slightly at how close that was.

"I just hope that these Gems are trustworthy" I continue, looking ahead at the dark gray mountains we're coming closer to.

After talking with some Amethyst allies, they gave us information about a grouping of Bismuths that were tucked away in these caverns. Supposedly, the Bismuths are excellent sword smiths, and seeing as though the war is approaching, I'll need a weapon to use in a fight. I surprisingly found out that I'm able to summon a shield from my Gem, but that would only last me for so long in battle and I can't have Pearl or Garnet shattered trying to protect me.

Letting my gaze wander over to the fusion once more, I reminisce

about the time we've spent together since she first agreed to join us. Pearl and I helped her come up with the name Garnet, the inspiration coming from the logic of a Ruby gem mixed with a Sapphire gem. Pretty easy really, but after we gave her the name, Garnet was much more open with us. From her, I found out that both the Ruby and Sapphire were both members of Blue Diamonds court and that they had to run away, for they risked getting shattered if they had stayed. I felt completely sympathetic for her when she said that, for I know the feeling of not being able to feel safe around those you were previously close to.

What I'm doing now is not just fighting for the planet anymore. Now that I've seen Garnet and all that she stands for, I know now that I've gotta fight for Gems as well as the humans. Innocent and pure beings like humans and Garnet do not deserve to be treated like the Diamonds would have them be. That's why this weapon will be an important next step in liberating these two peoples. Once I have something to fight this war with, a gathering of forces from all sectors of the Kindergartens is the only thing left to do. Then, the war begins. Then, those that served 'Pink Diamond' will be eliminated. Then, all will work out accordingly.

"Looks like we're here, Rose" Garnet speaks up, ripping me away from my thoughts.

I blink my eyes a few times and notice that the fusion is indeed correct. Before us three lies a circular door with what appears to be the shape of a Bismuth gem in the center. Surrounding said door was tall, jagged peaks of rock that bear similar resemblance to that of the Prime Kindergarten, though the rock from this spot has more of a cooled magma to it. It especially makes sense because of all the rising steam and heat from below us.

But, back on the door, I wonder if we have to announce ourselves in someway. Otherwise, it appears that the entrance will only open from the inside. I send a questioningly glance Pearl's way and she holds up a finger as a way of saying 'wait'. I bit my lip in anticipation and a minute or so later, the gem shape glows and the two sections of the circular-shaped door split away from each other, opening the way completely. However, as the small amount of dust cleared, I see that a single Bismuth stands in our way, no doubt the

one that let us in.

"Ah, the Amethysts from Facet 3 said you were coming, Rose Quartz" The builder gem remarks, stepping back and waving our little trio forward, "Come on, we're not gonna stop Homeworld by standing around, are we?".

I nod and follow the Bismuth as she walks away down a narrow, sloping tunnel, Pearl and Garnet sticking close behind me. The way is very short compared to the distance it took to reach this place itself and soon enough, sounds of hammer clanging and metal being cooled are heard. The Bismuth then leads us into a bit bigger cavern, one that takes on a sphere shape and has multiple other Bismuths working at different points. Some of them pause and stare at me as I pass by their stations. I'm flattered to say the least. Our guide then stops at the far end of the room, right where another Bismuth stands at the ready by a lava waterfall. Both our guide and the second Bismuth look exactly the same, minus the small fact that first has less markings on their work apron, signifying their role amongst the rest of the Bismuths. Pearl, Garnet, and I stop and wait patiently for what's to come next.

"Hello there, Rose Quartz. It's an honor" The second Bismuth greets us.

"Please, the pleasure is mine" I reply, "So, what do have for us?".

"Well..." The Bismuth trails off, grabbing a set of parchment from her apron pocket and unfolding it, "It's a more basic design than anything you'll find on Homeworld, but it's thick blade and sturdy handle will serve you decently".

At this point, I was happy that they had anything for me at all. This felt like an exciting new experience, one that I'm able to explore all on my own. Yellow forbade me from visiting the Bismuths on Homeworld, claiming that I wouldn't ever need a weapon because 'my authority would be as sharp as any sword forged by the builders'. As I stand now though, I feel like I'm getting a gift and even that in of itself is cause for joy.

"Go for it" I say.

The Bismuth then looks to its counterpart, the one who lead us in here, and after receiving approval, puts away the design and begins collecting metal scraps from different jars along the walls. She then gathers some in one fist and the rest in the other, dunking both hands simultaneously into the lava. The Bismuth then trudges over to a workbench located a little ways behind us and releases her grip, letting two glowing bars. The gem's hands then shapeshift into hammers and began pounding away at the bits of hot metal. What follows after I can't quite keep up with, but the gist of it is a collection of molding the hand guard, making out the length of the blade, securing the blade to the hand guard, crafting a handle from another mineral amalgamation, fusing said handle to the inside of the hand guard and blade, and lastly sealing the other end of the hand guard with the handle and putting a circular pommel on the end.

The sword's then dipped in some kind of solving liquid and then handed off to another Bismuth that saunters over. My group follows the new Bismuth over to a spot adjacent to the crafting station and together, we watch as a thorn pattern is carefully etched onto the handle of the sword. Some markings are then made along the pommel, outer hand guard, and on the part of the blade that touches the hand guard. The Bismuth then clears away the shavings off the sword, then holds it out to me like they were presenting it to a Diamond. I thank her and take the handle, holding the sword up. I find out after taking a few practice swings that it's perfectly balanced for me and has the right amount of weight on each individual slice and jab.

I feel immensely satisfied now that I have the perfect weapon to fight with. Thanking the Bismuth once more, I place the sword in my Gem and turn to leave. Pearl and Garnet were looking around a bit, so I had to get their attention after a bit. Once I got them following me again, I began to leave out the same tunnel we first entered through. As I go to exit out the entrance though, I'm stopped by a Bismuth different than any others I've encountered thus far. She runs behind us, asking me to stop, which makes me pause and spin around.

"Rose Quartz! I've heard about you for a while now. I felt so

inspired by hearing about how you stood up against Pink Diamond that I couldn't wait to talk to you in person! I really wish to join your cause" The unique Bismuth exclaims.

I quickly glance at Garnet and Pearl, then bend down to claps the Bismuth's hands together.

"Of course you may, Bismuth" I say softly, "Never forget that your life is your own. You can be whoever you choose to be, not what the Diamonds would want you to be".

Bismuth smiles and morphs her hands into axe heads.

"You got it, Rose. I'll fight beside you to the very end!" The new Crystal Gem states confidently.

I smile, loving her dedication and enthusiasm.

Standing back up, I then resume our walking. Pearl takes my left and Garnet takes my right, Bismuth following directly behind me. Still though, I can't help but feel like I'm forgetting something, or someone. I furrow my eyebrows and think.
Nothing.....nothing.....hold on.....uh oh.

"Oh my stars!" I realize suddenly.

"What? What is it, Rose?" Pearl asks, Bismuth and Garnet looking worried.

"I forgot about Steven!" I exclaim.

~~ Meanwhile.... ~~

Steven's P.O.V

Three days I've been on Homeworld so far and no luck has come my way. I knew the planet was massive, but I clearly must've underestimated the entire enormity. Sneaking around has been a challenge too, because being a human on a mostly gem world tends to make you stick out like a sore thumb. Yet somehow, I've

managed to endure so far, so I'm apparently not that noticeable. That or my relatively small size gives me the upper hand.

Right now, I'm flattened up against a wall, but not in a 'I've been found out and am about to be tortured all seven days to Sunday' kind of way. In my case, I'm trying to be as stealthy as possible, especially in regards to room beyond this wall. In my short time here, I've managed to deduce that the Diamonds must keep a record of their created gems somewhere on the planet. The only problem I face now though is getting inside without being spotted, since you know, there's lots o' Gems scampering around this place all the time.

Fortunately, my window of opportunity comes sooner than expected in the form of some voices getting louder and louder, meaning that they're coming towards the door. I flatten myself even further against the smooth surface and hold my breath as two Zircons come out, babbling about a case or something important to them. I pay them little notice though and just when they're barely past me, I dive forward and slide past the open doorway before it closes a second later. Then, patting myself off, I ease up off the slick ground and take a look at the ceiling above.

The walls go up for miles with shelves upon shelves of holographic storage files. Like a library, each file is placed alphabetically up to down and are aligned with their adjacent neighbors perfectly. Groaning at how enormous the selections are, I run a hand through my, clench my fist in frustration, then use my floating powers to leap up to the closest file storage. As I reach the file, I press my palm against a hand-shaped scanner, causing the equivalent of a file cabinet drawer to pop out of the wall. I clench onto the sides and heave myself up as best I can, then begin swiping right through the individual logs. Hmm...these are logs for the creations of Peridots so I must be in the wrong place.

Gritting my teeth, I shut the drawer and push myself off the wall, flying over the opposite wall. I open another file drawer and quickly sift through its contents, but that has nothing I want either. I'm now getting kinda cranky, so I fly farther up the wall and check another one. Nothing. A few spaces to the right.....nothing. Four to the left.....also nothing. My impatient grows. What now? Well... I

guess I have to try the other walls to see what they have, but according to the way it's been going so far, I wouldn't press my luck. So, I shoot forward and fly at the adjacent wall, a.k.a the one to my right. I hit the first scanner I can find and latch onto the side of the drawer, immediately bringing up the digital files and swiping through them. I feel my frustration begin to ease as I see that these logs are dated for Peridots! Yes, I've found them! With a more optimistic vibe beating in my heart, I then look through to try an find the very specific Peridot I need. Ugh, they're all sort by facet and cut order. What did Peridot say her numbers were?

Before I can come up with any pertinent guess though, a white sphere then phases through the wall, surprising me enough that I stupidly let go of the drawer. But, miraculously, the sphere zips down and envelops me before I hit the ground. The internal bottom of the sphere is still hard though, so maybe I'm not out of the ballpark yet when it comes to painful landings. My curiosity at the moment however is directed at what exactly this orb is and more specifically, the grey, black, and white colored Pearl standing in an odd T-pose fashion right in front of me. The Pearl has a sparkly dress, a couple Princess Leia style side buns for hair, and for some reason, one eye that looks like cracked glass. I get to my feet and am about to ask what she's doing, but it beats me to it.

"White Diamond requests your presence" The neutral-colored servant says, her voice completely monotone.

She then spins around too smoothly to be real and the sphere begins to soar upwards. I feel it phase through the wall once more, but what I'm wondering is where exactly is this White Pearl taking me. And more so...

Who is White Diamond?

I get my answer soon enough as the sphere lands as quickly as it took off, it's outer shell collapsing in and fading entirely within a matter of seconds. The Pearl then hovers over to these two large sparkling white pillars, holding the same creepy pose the whole time. It doesn't speak again and I'm left standing there awkwardly wondering where this White Diamond is. That's when I see the two sparkling pillars move. Huh? Pillars don't move. Wait....hold on a

second.....those aren't pillars.

They're legs.

My fear rising, I slowly crane my neck and look up. The massive white legs go up and up until they stop at a triangular shaped torso, which in of itself leads up to an elongated trapezoid shaped chest with two arms as long as three football fields sticking out. At the very, very top though is a head with points poking out the top like that of a porcupine. The face that dons said head has two arching eyebrows, lips as black as space, a triangle nose, and rhombus-shaped pupils with grey irises and black pointy eyelashes. So this is White Diamond, huh? She's taller than Blue and Yellow combined! But what could she want with me, cause why else would I have been brought here?

"Greetings, little one" A soft, sickly sweet voice says, coming from White Diamond herself, *"I'm White Diamond. Now would you care to explain why you've been sneaking around my planet for the last three rotations?".*

I'm a bit scared to answer, wondering what she could do to me if I offend her in any way. With a big a diamond as she is, White could probably extinguish my life with the snap of her fingers or something, definitely quicker than I'm fading in and out of existence. I don't want to make her wait though, so I clear my throat and state my purpose.

"I'm looking for a specific Peridot and Lapis Lazuli. I need their help in putting a stop to the conflict brewing down on the planet Earth" I tell her honestly.

White studies me with analytical eyes, looking for any reason to doubt me, I suspect.

"Earth, you say? I remember that planet. My little Starlight's colony. But yet you mention conflict? Of what sort do you mean?" White asks, keeping her voice the same.

"Rebellion, your Radiance" I add, trying to include some manners, "Rose Quartz has been preparing for a complete takeover of the

planet. But....between you and me...Rose Quartz isn't who she claims to be. It's just Pink Diamond with her Gem rotated to look like a Quartz".

White pauses for a minute before speaking back up.

"Ah, I see. Pink's up to her games again, isn't she?" White Diamond smiles eerily, *"Rebellion is indeed a very serious manner, young one. But say I help you and grant you your wish of these gems. What will you choose to do with them?".*

"I'll stop Rose/Pink, end this little selfish act of hers, and bring her to stand trial before the other Diamonds" I state firmly.

White grins then lets out a tiny laugh.

"My, my, my, what an interesting specimen you are! Such dedication. Such commitment. Tell me, what is your title, little human?".

"Steven" I reply.

"Well, Steven..." White begins, bending down and resting on her sparkly knees, *"If you are entirely confident you can do what you claim, I shall grant your request. I too wish for my Starlight's games to end. I'm glad you will be able to help the Diamond Authority in ways much of your species could not".*

"I won't let you down, White Diamond" I assert confidently.

"Oh, I know" She chuckles, turning to her Pearl, *"Pearl, call in...what is the facet and cut, Steven?"*

"Oh, um... Peridot Facet-2F5L Cut-5XG" I recite from memory.

White Pearl nods and brings up a holoscreen, tapping a few places and placing the order. A minute or so later, a white bubble similar to the one I was 'escorted' in phases through the wall and unfold to reveal the very Peridot. I almost don't recognize her because she has her limb enhancers attached. Nevertheless, Peridot trots in a very formal manner over and salutes White Diamond in the way other gems do with their superiors.

"You asked for me, my Diamond?" Her scratchy voice asks.

"Yes, Peridot Facet-2F5L" White confirms, then looking over at me, *"You are ordered to aid this human in his efforts to bring down Rose Quartz' rebellion".*

Peridot looks confused, probably with the fact that she was asked instead of a Jasper or Amethyst to aid someone like me. Peridot still can't disobey a direct order from a Diamond, especially White, so she nods and holds the salute".

"It will be done, my Diamond" Peridot replies firmly.

White smiles, looking from Peridot back over to me.

"It looks like you're on your own now, little one" White Diamond says, a bubble beginning to form around me and Peridot.

It then lurches backward, phasing part-way through the walls of this sparkly cavern. Before we're all the way through though, White says one last thing.

"I hope to see you again soon, Steven" The Diamond concludes.

The bubble then fully forms and phases completely through the wall. The orb then zips down and away to the Homeworld Warp, the very way I arrived mere days ago. The sphere deposits Peridot and I then zips back into what appears to be a larger-than-life version of White Diamond's head. Weird.

"So, what are your orders, human?" Peridot asks, keeping her tone calm and formal.

Feeling nostalgic about missing her back in my present, I smile and walk closer to her.

"If you wouldn't mind, Peridot, I'd like to get a few things straight right from the get-go. I asked for you specifically because you are the only one with the qualifications to help me" I explain, getting a surprising blush from her.

"Oh...uh...um...thank you, human" Peridot fumbles.

"Also, my name is Steven, but between you and me..." I continue, lifting up the hem of my shirt to reveal my Diamond Gem, "I'd prefer if you didn't call me by 'my Diamond'".

Peridot freezes, her mouth agape.

"Another Diamond!!" She then exclaims, "Oh my stars! This is truly a momentous day!".

I chuckle at her expression.

"Ehh, not really another Diamond, but believe what you'd like to. Bottom line though, I need your help, Peridot. I can't stop this war by myself" I press.

"Of course I'll aid you. It would be an honor, Steven Diamond" Peridot replies, forming the Diamond salute once more.

I roll my eyes and move to get on the Warp Pad, but then multiple streams touch down with gems running past us like a herd of buffalo. Me and Peridot are forced apart by the brutal wave of fleeing gems, but we're each able to push are way up to the front near the Warp Pad. We then reach for each other and grip fingers, hers being artificial of course, our grips strong as we Warp away to Earth. While Peridot and I are zipping towards Earth, we notice the continual waves of Gems flying past on their own separate Streams. I look at Peridot, confused, but she just shrugs, meaning she doesn't know why it's like this either. The two of us then touch down on the Galaxy and when our Warp Stream clears, I see why everyone's fleeing.

A big fight has broken out between some Amethysts, some Bismuths, and a particular ocean gem. All are engaged in some form of hand-to-hand combat, though why they're fighting is still unknown to me. Gems that don't want to be caught up in the brawl storm up to the Galaxy Warp, pushing past Peridot and I and Warping away. Lapis looks to be in trouble though, so I tug on Peridot's artificial arm and motion for her to follow me. We run down the slope and get closer to Lapis, but I then see a Bismuth rearing up to hit her while her back is turned.

"Lapis, look out!" I shout, creating a shield directly between her and the Bismuth.

Lapis spins toward us, shock in her expression, and then sees the threat behind her that was previously unknown to her. My shield deflects the Bismuth's attack and Lapis is able to summon a water fist and knock it skyward, leaving room for the other attackers to move in. By that time though, Peridot and I are in the middle of the fray, throwing punches of our own and fighting alongside Lapis with my shields and Peridot's gem destabilizer. Lapis is quick to figure out that we're here to help her and gets in the groove just as quick, the three of us forming a tight semicircle. The rest of the Bismuths and Amethysts are poofed in no time, their gems scattered all over the floor of the Galaxy Warp. Lapis then falls to her knees, making me bend down to see if she's hurt.

"Are you ok?" I ask, inadvertently clasping her hands.

"Yeah, I'm.....I'm fine" Lapis replies, visibly blushing a shade of medium blue while slowly looking up at me, "Who are you exactly and why did you decide to help me?".

"My name is Steven" I say, introducing myself before motioning to Peridot behind me, "That is Peridot. We're here because we need your help, Lapis".

"My help?" The ocean gem asks in confusion, rising to her feet.

"Yes, your help. You are more special than you realize, Lapis. A rarity amongst other Lazulis. Out of all your kind on Homeworld, I need you. So, will you help me?" I ask.

Lapis pauses for a second and I begin to think that I scared her off, but then she rushes at me and squeezes me in a hug. I gasp in surprise but then hug her back, glad to have her on my side.

"Thank the Diamonds for you, Steven. You saved me from being poofed and potentially shattered, so I will indeed help you" Lapis replies, sounding immensely grateful, "But what exactly are we going to do?".

I smile and look at the Sun coming just over the horizon.

"We're gonna save this planet" I tell her.

A Hybrid's Court

Steven's P.O.V

"But first, I need food" I admit.

Lapis and Peridot immediately frown. They're probably wondering why after all that heroic talk, I then said something as simple minded as 'me hungry'. Thinking about now, I'm kinda wondering myself why I said that, but I can't really take it back now. Man, people like me really gotta watch what they say. After all, you only really get one chance at a first impression, even though I'm pretty sure I already made it. You never know though.

"Ok, but what is this thing you refer to as 'food'?" Peridot asks, completely confused.

"Oh! Well, it's either bread, berries, cheese, or something else that has protein around here" I explain, but then see on both of the gems faces that I wasn't really helping, "...Ok, I guess that didn't help to elaborate on anything. Um... I suppose another way to describe it is something that is seen being passed around by humans that is also out inside their mouths".

"Hmm.." Peridot hums, scrolling through a hexagon screen made of her limb-enhancer fingers, "I suppose we could do a scan of the immediate area and see about triangulating down to a single location, if that would help at all, my Diamond".

"Sure, let's get right on it" I respond.

Peridot commences this 'search' thing that she can apparently do. While the green bean pole is hard at work, Lapis then wanders over and looks at me in an almost fascinated way. Maybe she's still in shock of me saving her, though I'm kinda doubtful. Being saved by me is not usually the kind of thing that gets the ladies looking at me like I'm eye candy. That or I've been doing the wrong things so far

in my life.

"Can I help you with something, Lapis?" I ask kindly, guessing that she'd like to ask me something.

She looks down hesitantly and clasps her hands together in front of her, almost debating to herself if she should say what she's about to say.

"Well..." Lapis starts, "I can't help but be curious about something. So, if you wouldn't mind me asking, what exactly are you, Steven?".

I run my teeth back and forth over each other, thinking of the best possible way to answer her.

"Have you ever heard of the term *hybrid,* Lapis? A mixture of two different materials/elements? That's me. I'm part Diamond and part human, or organic as you'd call them. A combined result of two peoples that agreed to live in harmony beside one another, but also a bridge to keep each of said groups from falling out with the other. At least, that's what I wanted to do with my life before this came along" I carefully describe, trying to lay it out in terms that she'll understand.

Due to Lapis' nodding, I must've done alright.

"I see.." Lapis replies, sounding clearly intrigued, "But how is it that you were created? Certainly there had to have been special/unique method for your design!".

I pause as she asks this. I don't know if I should tell her about Pink Diamond being my mother or not. I'm partially scared of Peridot finding out, even though she's agreed to help me in this, but what I'm more frightened of is if I spill the beans and then they both turn on me. Granted, Peridot was given a direct order from White Diamond, of all people, but Pink is still a fairly respected Diamond herself around this time. If I make clear that I'm going to war with a Diamond, a being that Lapis or Peridot would have trouble defying because of their nature to serve them, I could immediately lose their support. Then again, if I don't tell them now, when will I? Waiting isn't the best choice and I wouldn't want to be on the

receiving end of their anger if something goes awry and we're forced to shatter someone all because I didn't elaborate on my personal attachment to this instance. So, I guess I'll be out with it!

"So....you see..." I trail off momentarily, twisting my foot against the ground "I was created from the...uh...*unity*...of a male human and a Diamond".

"Really! Which Diamond are you from?" Lapis asks, now fully interested.

"Ummm.....well" I start again, before Peridot interrupts me.

"Pardon me, Steven, but I've locked onto a fairly reasonable 'food' source per your request. I've also calculated the distance between Warp Pads and am ninety two percent certain that we'll align nearly perfectly with the destination" Peridot informs me.

"Ok, what about the other eight percent?" I ask, just to be certain.

"That leads us into the center of a collapsed star, but I'm confident that won't happen" Peridot smiles, feeling so certain of herself.

"Oh good. For a second there, I was actually worried" I say, sarcasm lacing my voice.

"Don't worry, Steven, I'll make you're not disintegrated into space matter" Peridot then assures me, some of her snarky attitude remaining in her voice and making her statement seem like something I should obviously know.

Guess gems don't understand sarcasm. Oh well.

"Fine, fine, sure" I relent, looking back at Lapis, "You coming, Lapis?".

"Of course" The ocean gem answers, walking behind me as I step onto the Galaxy Warp alongside Peridot.

Lapis gets behind me and for comfort, I take her hand in mine, lacing our fingers together. Her hand feels softer that I would've imagined. She doesn't squeeze back at first, probably from the shock

of it all at first, but then eventually, Lapis holds my hand back. Peridot then activates the Galaxy Warp and the three of us are sucked up into the sky. While keeping a firm hold of Lapis' hand, I count the seconds until we touch back down again, partially because I have a tiny fear of getting stuck outside the Warp Stream and freezing to death in the cold, empty void of space. Fortunately though, I only get to a count of 7 Mississippi before we make landfall and touch down on the connecting Warp Pad. I'm immediately relieved, but then when I see where we are, I feel instantly let down.

"Peridot, why are we back at the Beta Kindergarten?" I ask, getting slightly annoyed.

"Well, this was the quickest way to get to the location of your organic substance needs" The technical gem replies matter-of-factually.

"Is that so, huh? Seems to me like this place is the opposite of anywhere I might find something to eat. Areas like this that are dry as a desert and make my throat itchy usual don't scream four-course-meal, but hey, maybe that's just me!" I exhale in frustration, losing just a bit of my cool.

"Hey, hey, we'll find our way out here, Steven. Don't worry" Lapis says, coming around to face me before sending a glance towards Peridot, "Right, Peridot?".

"Yes, of course" She responds, bringing up her screen once more before walking on ahead down the smoothly carved path directly in front of us.

I huff at the green being but with a shake of her head, Lapis tells me to not say anything else that I could later regret. I then try to calm down and just go after Peridot. Lapis keeps pace with me and as we're walking together, she brings up what I said to her before we left the Galaxy Warp.

"I hope you don't mind me saying this, but I think you're very sweet, Steven" She admits.

"No problem, Lapis. You're pretty cute as well" I tell her.

"C-Cute? You think I'm cute?" Lapis stutters, caught off-guard by my comment.

"Of course I do. You're adorable and gorgeous too" I continue while smiling.

".....You're too kind" Lapis smiles quietly, happy tears starting to make their appearance.

I smile and nod, then noticing something off to the side a little ways up from the bottom of the path wall.

"Hold on a second, Peridot" I say, halting the green gem.

Her and Lapis then frown and come over as I stand with a growing smile, my hands on my hips as I look up at what I've discovered. A hole shaped like a cactus, that's in fact much larger than any of the normal Amethyst birth holes, sits about five or six feet up in the air from where my height reaches. I jump up and land inside the hole and after running my palm across it's finely grained surface, I know for sure that this is Jasper's hole. Memories from when Peridot, Amethyst, and I visited here that one time in the past start to fill my head at the thought, but I push them back and turn around to look down at Lapis and Peridot waiting below.

"Looks like Jasper's been made already. Homeworld must've already started ordering more gems made to fend off Rose Quartz' attacks" I inform them, watching them nod.

I then hop down from the hole edge and land calmly on the dusty ground.

"Wonder where she wandered off to" I ponder out loud.

"Not that far, little runt" A voice then growls confidently behind me.

Peridot, Lapis, and I spin around and sure enough, there she is. The tall, very well-built, orange Quartz stands a menacingly six feet away, grinning maniacally at me. I feel Lapis and Peridot move to go around front and protect me, but I hold them back with both

hands held up behind my back. I then slowly and carefully walk up closer to Jasper, keeping in mind that she'll more than likely want to attack me. I then stop at a reasonable distance and stare her down.

"Lovely to see you, Jasper" I begin casually, "What brings you around these parts?".

"My duty" The tiger gem answers simply, "It's my job to keep the flow of gem production constant in the Beta Kindergarten while my Diamond is busy fighting that despicable Rose Quartz. Now tell me, tiny human, why are you here with one of Yellow's Peridots and a Lapis Lazuli from Blue Diamond?".

"Oh, us?" I say, taking a step back after I notice her take a step in my direction, "We were just leaving".

Jasper then summons her helmet, looking ready to charge at me like a bull during a Mexican bull fight.

"Sure you were" Jasper snaps unconvinced, rearing up and running full speed at me.

Lapis and Peridot clench their fists and prepare to defend me, but I once again stop them and wait in place for Jasper to get closer. Due to my past battles with her, I remember a technique Amethyst and I developed to immediately take down the raging Quartz. As Jasper's nearly in front of me, I sidestep at the last possible second and sweep one foot underneath her, tripping her up and causing her to face plant against the ground. I then act quickly and summon a shield large enough to cover her, placing it over her and holding it down with my foot.

She's pretty stuck now. Jasper grunts and groans, but no matter how hard she tries, she can't move while underneath my shield. Still, the orange Quartz grits her teeth and strains to turn her head, miraculously able to make eye contact with me. When she sees me though, her angry eyes change to ones fill with fear and surprise, which confuses me. I frown and look up to see if either Lapis or Peridot can muster an explanation. Both are just as shocked as Jasper, but Lapis points out that my eyes are different. Curious, I

bend my arm and form a shield on my wrist like a man wears a wristwatch. Then, upon looking at my reflection, I see what everyone's so hyped up about.

My pupils are diamonds. And even more, they're pink diamonds. Interesting. I never knew that my eyes could do that, like I'm finding out more and more about myself every passing day, but I guess that's from me being Pink's son, gaining her powers and all. Then, I freeze with realization. Fascination is beaten to the ground and replaced with worry. Now that Lapis has seen them, she more than likely knows who's offspring I am. It frightens me, though in the back of my mind I'm unsure if that's right to feel since Lapis isn't entirely the judgmental type.

"M-My Diamond? I-Is that you?" Jasper asks, now sounding scared.

I sigh and make the shield fade from my arm, gazing down at the trapped soldier.

"Sorry, Jasper, but I'm not your Diamond" I inform her, "I'm her creation".

"Creation?" Jasper questions, "Pink Diamond made you?".

"Correct. Now, can we talk like proper gems or you going to continue acting rashly?" I say, raising a critical eyebrow at her.

"I'll behave, Creation of Pink. My apologies" Jasper relents solemnly.

I then nod once more, though kind of more to myself than anyone else, and remove my foot while making my second shield disappear. Jasper then stands up tall once more, but looks down at me with more uncomfortableness to her, like she's afraid I'll shatter her for that attempt on my life.

"Please, Jasper, don't be scared" I assure her, being so bold as to walk up and reach out to pull her hand forward, opening it to place mine against hers, "I'm not going to hurt you. After all, you were just doing what you believed was right. Sometimes, that all any of us can do. I just hope you know that I don't hold this against you".

"If you say so....Pink's Creation" The orange quartz replies

hesitantly.

I smile, grabbing her hand and placing it right where her heart would be if she were human. She holds it there and I pat it gently before turning around to see if Lapis and Peridot haven't fainted from shock. Both are fine though, which is relieving, but Lapis takes me by surprise when she rushes up to me, getting down on her knees once she's directly in front.

"That was very brave, Steven" Lapis comments.

"She's right" Peridot adds.

I shrug, acting like it was no big deal, which it wasn't, then reach forward to pull Lapis into a much needed hug. She squeaks in surprise, blushing profusely at my gesture, but then reciprocating it back to me. By now, she's obviously deduced what affection can be shown between the two of us. Lapis then goes so far as to have her face up against my neck, which actually makes me blush too. Who knows, I might be developing a crush on Lapis.

My eyes then shift over to Peridot, standing all by herself looking incredibly lonesome. With one of my hands, I snap to get her attention and wave her to join in. She's at first slow to respond, but upon seeing my expression, the green beanpole then saunters over, bends down and hugs me from the side, showing an actual, genuine smile for once. Now only Jasper is missing, but she is quicker to get the message. I don't even need to beckon her forward before she's hugging the last free, open part of me. We're all in one big group hug right now. With feeling all their arms interlinked around me, I feel as if this can be a much better start to the future than the one Pink would set. Eventually, we separate, giving each other space, and it's then that I decide it's time to teach these gems why I'm fighting for this planet.

"Peridot, could you please lead the way to the source?" I ask.

"Of course, Steven!" She chirps happily.

"And, Jasper, would you care to tag along? I'd love to have you" I tell the orange quartz.

"Yes, I would very much like that..Steven" Jasper agrees, using my name for the first time.

"Alright! Great! Now, as we work our way out of Beta and towards wherever Peridot will take us, I think it's time I explain to you all why I'm choosing to stop Rose Quartz once and for all" I announce.

"You're going to fight against the rebellious Rose Quartz!?" Jasper remarks.

"Yes" I reply simply.

"Then please allow me to assist you in your endeavors, Steven!" Jasper volunteers.

"I would love nothing more" I accept.

Peridot then begins trudging back down the path we were headed before Jasper crossed us. The tiger Quartz and the lovely ocean Lazuli then stick to both sides of me, keeping pace with me as I trail closely behind Peridot. The green gem is quick to lead our group of four out a side tunnel and beyond the outer reaches of the Beta Kindergarten. It's then when we venture into jungle territory, filled with low-hanging branches and taller than tall trees. The Sun had just gone down as we left Beta, so darkness was easing its way in. Seeing as how Earth can be fairly beautiful as nighttime falls, I decided that now would be a good time to start my explanation.

"My reasons for choosing to stand apart from this uprising rebellion stem from both personal and non-personal ideals. As far as personal ideals go, Rose is a selfish, cunning, manipulative, lying, and overall just a terrible person. I refuse to let someone of those malicious traits corrupt and infect this planet with that level of toxicity. My non-personal ideals, though, are much grander than the gems of Homeworld" I begin, watching for when **they** will start to show themselves.

"What do you mean?" All three ask in unison.

I then stop in place, as does everybody, and point to the treetops.

"Look" I say.

Right then, the fireflies surrounding us light up all across the dozens of treetops. Some even spread their wings and fly, buzzing through the air in all sorts of patterns. Their glow casts a warm and enticing light down onto us, the Homeworld trio going all wide-eyed and slack jawed at the sight. A light breeze then sweeps by, rustling the trees and swirling leaves around in the air, blowing some past our group. What caps it all off though is the few butterflies that appear and flutter around in the air glowing a variety of colors ranging all across the spectrum. Jasper, Peridot, and Lapis gasp and spin in place, watching all of this go down around them. Lapis even cups her hands and watches as one of the butterflies lands in them, while Peridot gets one that lands on the tip of her triangle-shaped hair. I smile, glad that they are seeing it exactly like I do.

"Take a look around you, my friends. All this wonder, all this beauty. This is what I'm fighting for. To keep all of this living fantasy alive and prosperous. To make it so that so many others like you three have the chance to see it for themselves. A planet like this deserves to last as long as it can and only upon defeating Rose Quartz can we fully protect all this" I elaborate, finally answering their question.

The three are left in so much amazement that they aren't fully capable of responding to me just yet. In the meantime, I let them live in the moment, while looking downwind and seeing a tiny village a few hops, skips, and jump away. It'll be close enough that Jasper, Peridot, and Lapis will, so I won't have to worry about losing them. So, I quietly head over and walk as peacefully as I can inside the village. The people were very quiet, talking in near whispers, but then grow quiet when I enter.

I spot the chief of the people outside this teepee ahead and off to my right. Surrounding him is a fair number of both men, women, child, all of them devouring some meat, berries, and snippets of bread. I calmly approach, trying to appear friendly by pressing my palms together and holding them against my lips as I give a bow of respect. The chief nods, gesturing me to sit down with the others. I plop down right beside these two young women and both offer me some of the aforementioned foodstuffs. I politely accept, not wanting to be rude or seem needy, and dig in at an accepting pace.

I'll admit, it does taste different than what Pearl or Garnet might cook any other night, but it was still delicious and appetizing. I'm sure to give everyone my thanks, though I don't think they quite understood my English.

As a way to return their hospitality, I summon my guitar from my gem and begin fluttering my fingers over the strings, humming softly. I then decide to sing them *Lead Me Home* by Jamie Commons, seeing as it would have the appropriate tone and feel for this kind of environment. The people around me are confused at first, but being a folk attracted to music, they soon catch on and sway along with me. Once I'm finished, I can tell I left a good imprint on the people because smiles and numerous conversations began sparking up. The chief then said something to me, though I didn't understand what he meant, so I just bow with my hands clasped once more and slowly walk away from the camp, the warm and inviting fire getting farther and farther away each passing second.

I then walk back over to where Jasper, Peridot, and Lapis stand. Instead of chasing or looking at the fireflies though, they stand with proud smiles on their faces. They must've heard my singing, which makes me kinda blush with embarrassment. I usually don't sing that much and when I do, I'm not all that confident in my skill level. Either way, all three look happy once I'm standing in front of them once more.

"That was quite a marvelous display of singing, Steven" Lapis comments.

I release a small grin and nod as a reply. I then ask Peridot if she can lead us back to the Beta Kindergarten, to which she happily agrees and sends us all off walking again.

"Here's my plan for dealing with Rose" I say, right out of the blue, "She's gonna try to build an army from those that don't fit in to Homeworld's standards. That means we'll have to come up with an army of our own in hopes of at least countering her. It is for that reason why we've returned here".

I then point to the entrance of the Beta Kindergarten. We had so

little distance to walk and I had spent so much of it explaining that I didn't realize how quick we were coming up to it. And, to be clear, this isn't the way we left. This is the formal entrance. But, anyway, I stride inside and feel the trio follow me. I don't really know where I'm going with all these curved turns here and there, but now that the Sun's gone down, I'm more able to see a light on ahead of us, its glow getting less and less faint the more I move towards it. Eventually, it gets to the point where I round a corner to my right and stumble across a large handful of makeshift camps, their occupants ranging from Ruby's to Amethyst's to a couple Peridots. This is it. These gems are those that still remain loyal to the Diamond Authority and by a stretch, will make a fitting army to fight with.

Almost immediately as I walk inside the rather wide canyon, heads are turning and conversations are picking up. They mainly say "Jasper" and "Who's that?", but as I spot a nice outcrop of rock as to which I'll give my war cry on, some of these gems stand up and actually move towards our little group of four. The outcrop lies against the near top of a wall on the far west side of the canyon, but after a minute or three of walking, I get there with my three allies and float us all up to the overlook. Jasper, Lapis, and Peridot stand back, letting me take the stage, so I walk to the very edge and gaze down at the crowd gathering. It's amassing more and more every second and soon, nearly everyone is standing below the outcrop, waiting for me to speak.

"You've all heard the rumors. Rebellion against Pink Diamond. A leader called Rose Quartz. An army known as the Crystal Gems rising. May you all know, this is true" I say, my voice echoing off the canyon walls, some whispering stirring around the gathered crowd.

"However" I continue, "What these Crystal Gems and their traitorous leader Rose Quartz forgot is one very important thing. YOU!".

A few gems cry out in agreement.

"They believe that you all deserve to be run off the face of this planet, to be driven from the very place you were created from. Who are they to be acting like Diamonds over us? They aren't!" I

shout, getting more response this go around.

I nearly have this crew riled up, so I just gotta keep going.

"So, here and now, I ask each and every one of you, stand and fight! Fight for the planet you were made to call your home! Fight for the Diamonds of whom you live to serve! Fight to end this pitiful attempt of rebellion and wipe it out for good!" I shout.

"YEAAHHHHH!" The whole canyon echoed, raising their fists.

"TO WAR!" I shouted, pumping my fist in the air.

"TO WAR!" The gems shout back.

"TO VICTORY!" I shout louder.

"TO VICTORY!" The canyon echoes back, matching my intensity.

"AND TO THE END OF THE CRYSTAL GEMS!!!!!!!!" I finish, raising both hands up in the air.

The crowd erupts in cheers, the sound probably resonating for miles and miles. Everyone is all ready, their spirits fueled and their hopes higher than Homeworld. As the gems are getting each other roaring, I turn slightly to see the reactions of my three allies. Jasper and Peridot nod, while Lapis smiles wider than those two combined. It's nice to know that above everyone else, I know she'll have my back. Then, as I turn back to look out into the canyon, I focus on the horizon line in the distance.

Tomorrow, when the Sun rises, the fate of this planet will be decided once and for all.

Final Spark of the Rising Flame

Rose/Pink's P.O.V

All I am right now is a weeping mess lying on the floor of the moonbase. Not too long ago, I rushed back here worried that Steven might be hurt, starving, or even dead, but when I came inside and looked around, I found that he was gone. I immediately broke down, not having the slightest clue as to where he could've run off to. I blame myself mostly. If I had just brought him along on our missions with me, I could've kept a better eye on him and prevented a situation like this. It doesn't matter now though.

NOTHING MATTERS!

The poor little human probably got scared being all alone and accidentally warped off to someplace that caused him to get lost. He's probably out there right now, begging for me to find him and leaving me no way to bring him home! The tears are so brutal that I couldn't stop them even if I wanted to and right now, I don't want to. I want to feel this as a result of my failure. Pearl, however, is the opposite and has been trying to cheer me up for, like, ten minutes now. Nothing has worked and honestly, I'm tempted to tell her to stop, but some small part of me is grateful that she's here to listen and that I'm not, instead, all by myself like Steven was when I left.

"My Diamond, please.." Pearl says, trying to console me, "It's not that big a deal".

"Yes, it is, Pearl" I sniffle, "That precious and cute human is gone and it's all my fault. Who knows where he could be now?!".

I then hear Pearl grumble, mumbling to herself about something. What could she be thinking?

"What's on your mind, Pearl?" I ask, my voice croaking from the sobs.

"I'm wondering if maybe he was captured by the Diamonds or maybe that Blue or Yellow came here while we were out and found him here. They could've taken Steven back to Homeworld with them, thinking that he was some lost gem" Pearl explained.

I shudder at the thought.

"Oh, I hope not. I wish for anything else other than that!" I cry, holding my shaking hands together.

"That..or they could've just killed him" Pearl blatantly adds.

"WHAT!?" I spin around in shock.

"Well, my Diamond, Blue or Yellow have more than likely heard about our rebellion by now. It's possible that either of them might've came here to see how you were handling it and upon seeing the human there instead of you, killed him thinking that he killed you" Pearl describes rather calmly.

I feel panic and sudden onset fear latch onto me quicker than a Gem Incubator. It makes me shake so much that I accidentally fall forward onto the floor. However, I catch myself before I face plant, leaving me to gaze down at my own reflection. The face of a Diamond that has failed to protect the one she promised to care for. A 'flawed' Diamond, as White would describe me. One that deserved to be shattered for her ignorance, stupidity, and lack of responsibility. Is this why Yellow and Blue didn't trust me with my own colony? Is this fate showing itself in the most cruelest of fashions?

No. No, no, it's not like that. It's my fault that Steven was left here, but it's Blue and Yellow's fault that he's dead. It makes more and more sense the longer I stir on the fact. How could it not have gone down like that? Both are heartless and mean to those they view as lower than themselves. And, they're quick to shatter anyone that is even remotely disloyal to them. Yes... they took Steven from me... and now....I'm going to avenge him!

Clenching both my fists tightly, I rise up from my knees slowly and gaze once more down at my own self reflection. If I can't help Steven as a Diamond, then I'll have to fight for him as a Rose Quartz. Only one thing remains to set this war into motion and it's a move that previously was something I dared not venture into. Things have changed though. Now, it's the best and only option to rid this planet of any traces of Homeworld and to ensure that none of the Diamonds ever try to take this world from me like they did Steven. Blue and Yellow may ignore me as Pink Diamond, but as Rose Quartz, they'll have to listen. And they'll listen good.

"Pearl" I state firmly, not turning around.

"Yes, my Diamond?" She replies.

"We're moving ahead with starting the war. It's been delayed and stretched out long enough. Now is the time to act, but only after we do one last thing" I say, my voice monotone.

"And what might that be?" Pearl inquires.

"Those that stand in our way serve 'Pink Diamond', but if 'Rose Quartz' was able to remove 'Pink Diamond' from the planet, they would lose their master and have to either fight or flee this planet in hopes of finding new leadership under Blue, Yellow, or even White. So, we're going to do exactly that.." I partially explain.

"Um...I'm not sure if I like where this is going, but go on.." Pearl says hesitantly.

"We're going to shatter Pink Diamond".

Pearl is completely silent for a moment, but after the initial shock sets in, she responds in a very expected manner.

"WHAT?!?!" She shrieks.

"So, here's how it's going to work: You and I will stage a 'shattering' just outside my palanquin, and right after, we spread the word far and wide that 'Pink Diamond' is dead. It'll reach gems faster than anyone can predict and will hopefully reach Homeworld just as fast. Only then will Blue and Yellow take the rebellion seriously and

send their soldiers to defeat us. But, by that time, all those who served 'Pink Diamond' will have been defeated by us, leaving us in a good spot to defend ourselves against them" I lay out calmly.

Pearl nods, listening to each and every word.

"However, we will have to convince the others that this is real. Garnet, Bismuth, and all of our Crystal Gem allies can't know about any of this, which is why I'm trusting you to keep this as secret between you and me. Can you do that for me, Pearl?" I ask, giving her a serious stare.

"You have my word" She replies.

"Good. Let's do it" I sigh, wanting to get this over with and move on as soon as possible.

Pearl nods firmly and together, the two of us descend the steps of the moonbase and make our way to the Warp Pad. The two of us then Warp directly to inside my palanquin, a lone structure in the middle of a seemingly barren environment of dirt. I take a quick look through the hazy pink curtain leading outside and gaze at the land beyond. Soon, this planet will filled with strife and fighting, but all for a cause greater than even then Diamonds could understand. The thought of it is actually exciting for me.

"Um, my Diamond?" Pearl says, getting my attention.

I turn away from the curtain and see that she's holding my sword. I'm glad she remembered to bring it, but something about her expression makes me think that she's having second thoughts about this.

"Pearl, are you not wanting to do this?" I question, trotting over.

She bites her lips and fidgets nervously.

"It's just...is this really going to happen?" Pearl asks, appearing to have not fully grasped the reality of what's to come.

"Yes" I nod, "We'll just do it and then we'll be done. It's going to be easy!".

"There's got to be another way" Pearl says "I mean, maybe-"

I then cut her off. Pearl clearly said yes before with such assurance because she must've thought I wasn't going to really go through with this idea to the lengths I have planned. It's alright though, I guess I wasn't too entirely clear about my intentions. So, I'll just boil it down for her, nice and simple.

"Blue and Yellow don't care. They never have. This is Pink Diamond's colony. We can end it all right here, right now" I state with ease.

Pearl then clutches onto my sword tighter, getting a better grip onto the seriousness of this situation.

"You know this is crazy, right? Your status, my purpose. None of it will matter anymore. This will change everything" Pearl replies, coming to this realization at last.

I nod excitedly, glad that she's finally getting this and how grand it'll be once we win our freedom.

"I know. Isn't it exciting?" I smile.

"It is" Pearl blushes.

"We can leave our old lives behind. If this is truly my world, I want to give it to the Crystal Gems. I want to live here with human beings! I wanna to live here with you! We'll both finally be free!" I say enthusiastically.

Pearl then takes a short breath and says she's ready to do this. I squeal from excitement, and hold her hands in mine, eager to do this and gain what I've wanted since I first formed the Crystal Gems.

"I can't believe I'm going to do this" Pearl then admits.

I smile gently and then tell her the best response I can.

"Well, I can't exactly shatter myself" I admit.

I then step back and pick a lone flower from outside my palanquin,

spinning it around to admire it's beauty before walking back over and weaving it carefully into Pearl's hair. From the dirt that the flower came from, I use my Diamond strength and apply enough pressure so that the loose minerals harden into realistic looking rock shards, pink and all. Before Pearl draws my sword though, I set it on the ground and ask her once more to keep this whole ordeal a secret, so that nobody can ever know that we did this. Pearl nods, with her hands interwoven and covering her mouth, then shape shifts her form into that of Rose Quartz. I then do what must be done and walk swiftly past the curtain and outside my palanquin.

The darkness has settled in. What better time to stage a shattering than this? I then stop a few steps down and turn around to see Pearl walking out behind me. She has my sword drawn and is ready to strike. I need not wink or nod for her to know and after waiting a few seconds longer, Pearl swiftly draws the sword out of its sheathe and slices clean through my midsection in an almost perfectly horizontal slash. I feel my form giving out and my conscious receding into my gem. I soon can't my legs, or anything really, and then feel my vision go. It's then that I know my form has dissipated and that the deed is done.

Pink Diamond is no more. Only Rose Quartz remains.

There's no turning back now and there's no looking back either.

Onward we go to war.

Pearl's P.O.V

Almost immediately after I destroy her form, Pink's gem hovers in midair for less than a millisecond then drops to the dirt, leaving me to pick it up and hold it firmly in the hand that isn't currently clenching her sword. I then look back down and in the place where her gem rested just briefly lies the false gem shards that she created to seal the deal of her lie. I nod to myself, feeling like we've accomplished all that can be done right now, but as I'm about to leave, I hear footsteps and gasps quickly coming close.

Turning around, I see that it's a handful of Amethysts. They vary in color, but all are strong, equally constructed, and looking both

surprised and pretty mad. And, judging by the pink-colored diamond insignia on their uniforms, it looks like the enemy has come at just the right time. Now they've seen what Rose and I have allegedly done and can spread the word to all their friends, eventually working up the chain to the Diamonds themselves. However, as all five of these Quartz soldiers come to a halt and pant with anger, I know I'll have to put up a bit of a fit to keep up appearances and to, more than likely, get out of this alive.

"YOU SHATTERED OUR DIAMOND, YOU TRAITOR!" A few of them shouted at me.

I don't respond, which angers them more and causing those that spoke up to clench their fists and barrel towards me. Luckily, I can fight one-handed, otherwise I might've had to toss Pink's gem to the side or place it in mine to fight better. But no, I keep her nice and protected in one hand and raise my sword in the other. Both Amethysts aren't very coordinated in their striking, their attacks showing faults because of their emotions taking over too much of their technique, but that's ok for me because it leaves me a window to dash forward and spin in a mini tornado pattern. My sweeping motions cut clean through the two Amethysts, their shards falling to the ground almost immediately after their gems crack from the force of my slicing.

It was unfortunate to have to shatter them, but they wouldn't have shown me or Rose any more mercy. Besides, this is war now. It's either them or us and I certainly don't want to be on the more brutally receiving end. But anyway, once those Amethysts are shattered, the three others are now scared, their anger easily replaced with fear. After making some empty and veiled threats, saying how I'll 'get dealt with in due time', they scatter, running off to who knows where. That leaves me all alone, with the satisfaction of our plan in motion and the test of patience of waiting on Pink/ Rose to reform. Since she's a Diamond, it shouldn't be long, since most other gems longer to reform than Diamonds.

Sighing, I figure that it's best to head on back to where we set up base. Garnet, Bismuth, and the other followers Rose and I have accumulated will surely be wondering where we are by now. Rose told them that they were on a 'special mission' and surprisingly,

none of them questioned her. Shows how devoted and loyal they are to her. Just like me.

Our main base camp is located in the vegetation-ridden areas of Earth known by the humans as *forests*, more specifically the stretch located just northeast of the Prime Kindergarten, which I'm actually not that far from to be honest. Once I shifted back into my original form, it was much easier to cover the distance between here and the forest where our hideout is placed. I keep Rose's sword tucked under one arm and hold her gem int between my hands as I run. By the ten minutes it takes to reach the outermost edge of these forests, I feel Rose's gem heat up and start to glow. In order to keep up the secret and prevent any stray eyes from finding anything out, I run even faster into the treeline, feeling her gem grow even hotter.

Then, as I reach a good stopping point about twenty feet inside the forest, I let Rose's gem go and watch as it hovers in midair once more before glowing bright white and reforming into her complete state. I don't know how she's able to reform as Rose Quartz rather than Pink Diamond, but hey, it'll better keep up the lie, so who am I to complain? Speaking of which, Rose pants slightly and looks around to get her bearings, her gaze eventually settling on me. A smile then stretches across her face, meaning that she knows that everything's gone according to plan so far.

"We did it, Pearl!" She says enthusiastically.

I nod, smiling, then hand over her sword, since from now on, she'll definitely be needing it. Rose accepts it gratefully and then turns to look deeper into the forest.

"We gotta get back and rally up all we've gathered so far. We must make the first strike in order to win this war" Rose declares, heading instantly ahead and leaving me to pick up the pace to keep up with her.

We could've chosen any of the Kindergartens to house our rebellion base, and it was something both Rose and I considered at one point or another, but it was unclear how many gems that stayed loyal to Pink remained. Therefore, we needed a place that they wouldn't think to look for us. Worked out plenty well too. However, as Rose

and I near the bonfire lit center of our base up ahead a few steps, I can't help but question if everyone is indeed ready. The fusion called Garnet doesn't seem much like a fighter, but yet she still turned out to be plenty aggressive once put to the test with her gauntlets, so maybe I can't be too much of a put down.

Rose and I then step into the border of our base, a simply marked area of thick trees where our light and noise can be easily concealed. Walking inside, I look around and see many of our allies talking among one another, their weapons on their laps and their voices hushed. However, once Rose and I make our presence clear, nearly everyone stops what they're doing and looks at us, some standing up and approaching us. From that some are Garnet and Bismuth, the former still looking pretty cool with her new dark red outfit. Rose walks to the center of the encampment, drawing everyone's attention to her and getting all to gather around as she lays out or plan.

"As many of you may or may not have heard, Pink Diamond has been shattered!" Rose announces, some cheers erupting and some gasps heard, "War is now upon us, my friends. It's up to us to make the first strike and catch the enemy off-guard. Many gems still linger around this planet that chose to remain loyal to her, but once we eliminate them completely, the Diamonds will have no choice but to give their full attention to us!".

More cheering comes from the gathered and that's when I know they're geared up and ready to do this.

"Our first strike will be simple" Rose continues, giving me a nod that tells me to show the image of the Sky Arena through my gem, "Through some intel I was able to acquire, I found out that a considerable number of these hostile gems are based here in the Sky Arena. We will launch a surprise attack on them and catch them completely off guard. Any questions?".

There are none.

"Alright then, let's go!" Rose says, pumping her fist in the air and making everyone do the same.

All our allies then scramble for their weapons, grabbing them with haste and forming into groups. Everyone moves remarkably quick that in less than a minute, everyone is assembled. Now one big group with Rose, Garnet, Bismuth, and I in the lead, we march right through the forest and too the barren spot where the Warp Pad lies. It'll take us up there no problem, being the better option than having us try to fly up their one at a time. The spot is really easy to find, mainly because it's surrounded by land that's as empty and lifeless as the Kindergarten itself, making the shiny Warp Pad stick out clear as day. Mind you, it's dark as night outside now, but the point is proven.

Obviously, the Pad isn't large enough for our entire Crystal Gem army to fit on at once, so we're forced to split up into three groups and Warp them up on at a time. Group one is quick to go and then Garnet and Bismuth go with the second group, telling Rose that they'll scout ahead to see if there's trouble about. They soon disappear with the Stream and it's up to Rose and I to take up the remainder of our allies. She nods at me, smiling in a way that only I can understand, then ushers everyone onto the circle before getting on herself. I'm right behind her and as quick as an eye blink, we're sucked up and placed back down on the receiving Warp Pad.

The Sky Arena looms menacingly in front of us, it's tan-colored structure as unmoving and sturdy as Garnet's overall personality. Two sets of stairs lay in our path, one on our left and one on our right, both zigzagging up to the entrance of the arena. We're both eager to catch up to our comrades, so Rose and I take the lead as always and rush up the right side, our group keeping pace directly behind us. The stairs were nothing and we reach the top in no time, seeing the rest of our allies merged into one mega group at the entrance to the arena, Garnet and Bismuth among them. Rose and I push through our Crystal Gem allies and get to the front, where Garnet and Bismuth lean in to talk to us a bit more privately.

"We checked it out, Rose, but the place is completely deserted" Bismuth says quietly.

"Are you sure about moving forward?" Garnet asks.

"Absolutely" Rose answers, making me nod and summon my twin

sabers from my gem.

Rose summons her shield on her right arm and holding her unsheathed sword in her left. Bismuth molds her hands into axe heads and after sharing a collected nod of confidence, we all charge in there, our allies right behind us. After running a little ways in though, we skid to a halt and look around.

Sure enough, like Bismuth said, it's got no enemy gems.....or really anything around. While the steps leading up in a circular formation at the perimeter of the arena look slightly more cracked and decayed than the last time Rose and I were here, I still see no sign of any lifeforms. Rose scans the area, her face contorting in confusion. She's as perplexed as I am. I almost wonder if Rose got some bad info, but then an eerie sound echoes through the open hollow air of the arena.

Clapping.

It gets louder and louder until I then spot part of a shadow coming from the opposite end of the arena. The shadow then turns around the corner and walks out into the stadium, revealing itself to be....

Steven?

My mouth drops open in shock, but Rose easily outdoes me with hers practically hitting the arena floor. He's...fine. In perfect health, it looks like, and with not even a scratch on him. Is this where he ran off to? In that case, I grow kinda angry, seeing as though he made Rose cry for nothing. My tall and imposing leader though, is the first to speak up out of us all.

"Steven!" She cries out happily, "I was so worried about you! You just disappeared without a trace!".

"Rose knows this human?" Garnet murmurs. I nod in confirmation.

"What are you doing out here all alone?" Rose continues, "It's dangerous for you to be out here!".

Surprisingly, Steven sighs, loud enough that we can hear him, and clasps his hands together in front of himself. He looks so calm and

collected, almost like he planned for this. But that's absurd, right?

"Alone?" He questions, "What do you mean by 'alone'?".

Suddenly, the stands come alive with hundreds and hundreds of gems popping out from behind the raised cover along the interior edges. I feel myself shake from fear and by quickly glancing up at Rose, who has wide eyes of fear, I know she's feeling the same way. The count of this army is almost double the allies we brought, which places us at a bad disadvantage. All have their weapons drawn and Homeworld insignias across their uniform. I'm confused as to what this all means, but when I look back at Steven, who's grinning mischievously, I figure it out.

We've been led into a trap.

Face Off in the Sky Arena

Steven's P.O.V

The look on all their faces is priceless! I sincerely wish I had a camera on me right now but alas, not everything works out a hundred percent. Everything worked out just according to plan. After some stray Amethysts came running past our camp in the Beta Kindergarten, telling everyone about how they saw 'Pink Diamond' get shattered and how horrible it was, I knew exactly how to proceed. I had predicted that she'd do it at some point or other, so that left me with doing what she would try to pull on the Homeworld Gems. An ambush. Now, here we are. Rose and her Crystal Gems are right where I want em. And they're not walking away from this unscathed.

"Steven? What is all this?" Rose asks, sounding more confused and scared than angry.

I smile and gesture to the hundreds upon thousands of gems surrounding her.

"Isn't it obvious, Rose? You fell right into my trap" I smirk, "Besides, where do you think the knowledge of this place having 'lost Homeworld gems' came from?".

Her face morphs into an expression of shock and from that, my smile only further deepens.

"It's like I said, Rose, I'm not alone. In fact, I'm never alone" I state matter-of-factually.

Just then, as planned, Peridot and Lapis fly down and land on both sides of me, Peridot with her limb enhancers and Lapis with her water wings. The two gems then develop stern and stone cold faces upon looking at the Crystal Gems and their leader. Before I brought everyone here, and after the Amethysts came by with the 'sudden

news', I told the both of them Rose Quartz' secret identity. Needless to say, Peridot and Lapis were each very surprised. However, after I explained what she would do in the timeline of events that I had previously known to happen, the green and blue gems still agreed to stick by me and fight it out, even if it meant battling a Diamond in disguise. I left Jasper out of the loop, though, cause she'd be out if I ever told her that we were fighting her Diamond. Peridot and Lapis are more fine with this because they don't serve Pink. Jasper does, and from my past encounters with the wild and crazy Quartz soldier, I know for a fact that her loyalty extends pretty dang far for her Diamond. There'll come a time when I must tell her, or that it'll come out in some other way too, but I'll cross that bridge when I come to it.

"I want you to meet my friends, Lapis Lazuli and Peridot Facet-2F5L Cut-5XG" I say, introducing them, "To you, they might seem like any other gem that'll be shattered if they stand in your way of rebelling against the Diamonds. Not to me, though. To me, Lapis and Peridot possess kindness, honesty, and gratitude, things you have very few of".

After I say that, I see out of the corner of my eye that both gems are blushing from my words. Praise is a powerful thing, that much I'll admit.

"But, they're Homeworld gems, Steven!" Rose protests, "They serve **them**. They serve the Diamonds, rulers that would sooner shatter someone than give them praise or listen to their thoughts. The Crystal Gems exist to be better than them and to make this planet a safe haven for all those that can't live like that. I thought you knew this".

"Trust me, I do. But what you're failing to realize is that you're proving yourself to be no better than the enemy you're picking a fight with. You say you and your gem allies are better than Yellow, Blue, and White Diamond, but yet you still shatter anyone whom you think poses a threat to your cause. It seems to me like you don't know what you really stand for. But I do. You stand only for yourself. You might try to convince all your allies of it, like Pearl, Garnet, and Bismuth, but deep down, you're only wanting to do this for your sown selfish reasons. Only as long as you don't have to be

told what to by the Diamonds are you willing to fight against them, and by extension, me" I counter, looking her dead in the eyes as I lay out the facts.

"Keep speaking like that about our leader and I'll slice you into nothingness!!" Pearl shouts, pointing her sabers at me furiously.

Garnet, Bismuth, and the other Crystal Gems echo in agreement. I sigh in disappointment and shake my head, turning to my left and right while murmuring the same thing to both Peridot and Lapis.

"Get ready"

I then straighten back up and cross my arms over each other. Let it be said that I tried to play nice and give Rose/Pink Diamond a chance to reconsider her actions. Won't really amount to anything, I bet, but at least I can't say I only resorted to violence. Lifting my head, I make eye contact with Jasper, who's leading the right flank of the Homeworld Army. I give her the predetermined signal to 'get ready', i.e. winking at her, and she nods in a hardly noticeable fashion. I then feel slightly better on the inside, but then turn my head back towards the waiting Rose Quartz.

"Tell me, Rose Quartz.." I say, almost mocking her while I clench my fists together, "Have you ever picked a fight that you had no chance of winning?".

She frowns, as well as the large majority of the other nameless Crystal Gems, and that's when the moment presents itself to strike. I gather my breath and call out to my ace.

"JASPER!!" I shout into the air.

Then, like a storm out of hell, the very gem herself barrels over the side of the arena wall with her entire flank in tow. Together, the entire posse charges at the confused Crystal Gems, catching them off guard. Their response time fails them because as they're just realizing the situation that's just befallen them, Jasper tackles Rose like any professional football player I've seen on TV, sending them both tumbling to the arena floor while the others look shocked. The right flank of the Homeworld Army then makes contact, causing the

Crystal Gems to tighten their grips on their weapons and meet the challenge head on. The only problem though, is that they're only facing the right flank, leaving them completely exposed from behind, where the left flank is positioned.

With a shrill whistle, I signal the left flank to move in and catch the C.G's by surprise and by golly are they fast! As if being ordered by the Diamonds themselves, the some 300 gems jump over the side as if it's nothing and hit the ground in a roll while quickly picking themselves up to run full speed at the oblivious enemy. Right now, the Crystal Gems are crossing blades and exchanging blows with fast intensity, but when they hear another sound like a rampaging herd of buffalo coming their way, some towards the rear of the fight turn and gaze back in horror at the stampede barreling at them with such fierce speed.

In an attempt to counter this new and sudden attack, a portion of 100 gems turn away from the right flank of the Homeworld Army and do their best to hold their own against a force three times their size. Unbelievably, they actually handle themselves pretty well, being mostly Amethysts and Jaspers beating down other Amethysts and Jaspers. Meanwhile, Rose and Jasper are battling it out, Jasper attempting to sock Rose in the face while the false Quartz tries to strike at her with her sword. I can tell Jasper's trying her best to dodge, block, and strike where Rose least expects it but Rose still holds a distinct advantage over the orange Quartz. You see, Jasper's fighting style is much like a bull. She's mainly strength based and all about the bashes she throws against her opponents. When she's faced with a sword though, Jasper can't quite what she's normally accustomed to in order to win.

Soon enough, my theory proves right and Rose slashes Jasper across the chest, but fortunately her armor takes it more than her skin. Nevertheless, Jasper grits her teeth and grunts, swinging a punch in anger only to be met with another slash across the face. The tables have quickly turned against her and if I don't act soon, Jasper will most certainly be shattered! In quick succession, I motion for Lapis and Peridot to follow me. I summon twin shields on both my arms and charge toward the battle. Lapis glides alongside me, her arms spread and orbs of water hovering in her palms ready to be used,

and Peridot takes up the other side, one hand spinning like a saw blade while the other is constructed into a sort of mini blaster.

As the final surprise for the Crystal Gems, the three of us jump into the air, our weapons gleaming, and rain down on them like multicolored hail. Our little trio is immediately sucked into the fray as we land, having to dodge weapons and instantly counter others that swing near our vital limbs. I'm forced to duck from a spear, block two enemy swords with each of my shields, and trip up a Crystal Gem with one shield while knocking them further into the battle with the other. It's just constant, fast, and raging motion all around me. I can never stop moving for second, for if I do, it might be the last thing I do. Too many weapons are flying around right now and I can't let Jasper be killed. So, after throwing my right shield and knocking a Bismuth down before having the shield return to my arm, I focus on where Jasper is and begin to push my way through the tightly-knit crowd of opposing armies.

The whole time it was like trying to fight my way through a swarm of angry bees. Attacks from whichever side I looked, so not for one second did I ever feel like I'd catch a break. Somehow though, I made it past everyone and was just in time to watch Rose standing over a glitching Jasper, meaning that her gem got cracked. Rose is bringing her sword down for the killing blow, but I'm not about to let that happen. Moving so fast that it almost feels like slow motion, I dive face first towards the space in between the two, dip into a roll and come up at a kneel just in time to stop Rose's sword with clasping both shields now on my palms together on the blade to halt it. Rose is completely shocked and I grin mischievously before pulling out the tricks.

With both shields keeping her sword in place, I yank it forward, making both shields disappear while pulling it out of her hands and sending it flying behind me to embed itself into the far wall of the arena. Next, I kick Rose in the knee with one leg that gets her nearly tumbling to the floor and while she's off balance, I do an underhanded sweeping gesture with my right arm, forming a new but much larger shield underneath her. I raise my hand up in a very Magneto type fashion and send Rose into the air, but only just enough to summon that same shield on my right fist so I can jump

up and hit her so hard that she's sent flying to the other side of the arena. I land back on my feet with ease, then look down at Jasper, who's glitching even worse than before.

"I-I'm sorry, Steven" She manages while gritting her teeth in pain.

"Don't give me that" I scold, forming my bubble around the two of us, "The fight has just begun, Jasper, and I knew you at your best".

She holds the sides of her head in pain, experiencing a headache that's worse than a hangover of ten beers.

"I'll give it my all, but I don't know how much longer I can last" The orange quartz grimaces.

Biting my lip, I then run my tongue quickly over my palm and step toward Jasper, the healing spit sparkling like a freshwater lake.

"I can fix that gem of yours, just hold still and bear with me" I instruct, ignoring the bashes against the outside of my bubble.

Jasper forces her hands away from her temples and place them firmly on the ground, waiting as I place my wet palm against her nose. I hold it there for a few seconds and then see her gem glow, telling me to pull my hand away. As I do, I see the fruits of my labor doing its magic, sealing up the cracks in her gem in mere seconds. Jasper's form stops glitching instantly and her face eases up, causing her to test her fists to see how she feels. It's enough because she gets on her feet in no time, smiling gratefully at me.

"I'm in your debt, Steven" Jasper comments.

"Don't mention it. Now, let's get back to winning" I say, dropping the bubble and plunging the two of us back into the chaos.

Feeling her pride and energy restored, Jasper bursts forth with newfound strength and immediately starts pummeling an enemy Jasper pretty mercilessly. I nod in satisfaction to myself then begin to look around for where Rose might've landed. I have to dodge and block a couple more attacks, but I eventually see her pick herself up off the ground, an indentation in the arena wall showing a clear collision. The only problem is that I literally have two full armies

standing between me and her, both hacking at each other like there's no tomorrow. Still though, I could probably try to go around the side and avoid all the major conflict if I'm carefully and fast enough. Stealth ain't an option anymore since I'm clearly getting beat on from multiple angles. Then, a small tunnel through the vast amount of clashing gems opens up and seeing my window, I race through it. However, before I make it through to the other end, a new gem steps in front of me, cutting my path off.

I've never seen a gem like her before. Built as sturdy and strong as a Bismuth and as tall as an Amethyst, this gem towers over me with grayish skin, two small eyes with the same color, a dark red uniform, and small tan colored horns growing out both sides of her head. She looks down at me with fire in her eyes, reminding me very much of Ruby when she got mad. Yet still, I can't help but think that this gem is kinda cute looking, her red uniform reminding me of a cherry. So I guess I'll call her Cherry Quartz.

"This is for Rose, Homeworld scum" She growls, delivering a roundhouse kick so fast that I'm unable to react in time.

Her foot catches me upside the chin and it sends me airborne before gravity pulls me back down to collide with the arena floor. Upon hitting my head rather roughly, I feel the scene around me spinning a little bit. Luckily though, my focus comes back in time to see Cherry Quartz running at me like Jasper does. I summon a shield on my left fist and prepare to strike, but she then summons her weapon too, a whip a bit larger than the one my Amethyst at home has. She lashes it around my right arm and pulls me in for a quick blow to the head, but I'm ready this time and catch her fist with my shield, putting us both at a standpoint. Me and her press our separate forces against each other, the pressure and intensity only growing, and I know that the only way out of this is to yank on her whip and throw her off her game.

So, I do just that, clenching the whip with an underhanded right hand and yanking it forward to play on the small amount of slack she's given me. True to my thinking, she's pulled forward toward where I yanked on the whip and as she's leaning in, I gather a bit more of my Diamond strength and deliver a hard uppercut with my shield, getting her right where she hit me. It's enough to get both

her and her whip off me, the former falling on her side for a couple seconds. Cherry's clearly able to handle pain because before long, she's right back up and going for another swing at me. She's unable to make ends meet though because, out of nowhere, a water fist punches her to the side. Whizzing my head to the sky, I see Lapis hovering there with an orb of water hovering in her hand, a small smile printed on her face.

"Looked like you needed some help" Lapis says, floating down next to me and making her wings disappear.

"Yeah, heh, I guess I did" I admit, cracking my neck, "Thanks".

"Anytime" She faintly blushes.

I then hear growls emerge and the two of us look over to see that Cherry Quartz has once again recovered and is moving towards us at a dangerous speed. I glance over at Lapis and in almost perfect synchronization, we nod. The two of us bend our knees, ready to charge, and Lapis summons more water orbs. Then, then two of us run full speed at the raging red quartz, ready to tag team her until she's down.

When we collide, Lapis morphs one of her water orbs into a whip similar to one reminiscent of Cherry's and wraps it around her leg, pulling it fast and firm to trip up the rampaging quartz. Cherry twirls sideways in midair and that gives me the chance to deliver a hard jab to the side of her face, putting her to the ground. Almost immediately as she's floored though, Cherry grabs my ankle and pulls me forward so that I land flat on my back, simultaneously knocking the wind out of me. It feels like I can't breathe and I feel panic rushing through my bloodstream, but then I remember what Amethyst once told me. I simply try to calm down and suck in fresh air, which is a strange feeling due me not usually having to do this.

With my oxygen restored, I sit up and stand to go help Lapis, who's still fending off Cherry Quartz with some water tentacles on either side of the angry gem. I feel like it's time that this fight was brought to a close because lots of other gems are still in combat and I need to get to Rose before she shatters Peridot, Jasper, or any of the Homeworld gems. I approach Lapis, making sure I'm easily heard so

that she won't turn around and attack me too, then whisper in her ear how we take Cherry down.

She nods, dissolving the water tentacles for a second before making another form right in front of the quartz, punching her so hard and quick I thought she'd get whiplash. It doesn't though, only stunning her for a second before Lapis initiates the second portion of the plan and grabs both my legs with the water tentacle and lifts me up in the air. She then swings me around and around in circles like a hybrid wrecking ball, letting go at the last second when I'm aimed directly for Cherry. At the speed of light, I zoom towards her, forming a shield on my right fist and bashing it against her face when I make contact. Her head, along with her whole body, is smashed against the arena wall, but I'm not done yet. I call out for Lapis to do her thing and she stabs forward with her tentacle and pierces through Cherry's body. The quartz goes completely still, then reverts back into her gem, both the stone and myself dropping to the arena ground afterwards.

Landing with knees bent, I let out and exhausted sigh and make my shield disappear, walking over to where Cherry's gemstone lies. I pick it up and hold it in my interlaced palms, Lapis watching curiously as she walks up behind me. I then do what Rose Quartz would never do and form a bubble around Cherry's gem, sending it up to the arena sky where it hangs in stasis just like the burning room back at the Temple. I glance over at Lapis and she nods, proud of the choice I made. I then lean into a warm hug, clenching the Ocean Gem tightly and breathing steadily to calm myself. She hugs back, the both of us tuning out the loud and raging chaos happening everywhere. I then pull back when I feel better, not wanting Lapis to feel uncomfortable, then gaze fondly into her dark blue eyes. Lapis blushes and surprisingly, so do I. She's been beside me for so long now, it almost feels like she's apart of me. My face heats up even more, now overcome with this feeling of wanting to kiss her. I lean in just a bit to see if she'll follow, and when she smiles and gets closer, I close the distance to press our lips together. However, just as our lips brush each other, something happens.

Out of the blue, these two Crystal Gem Amethysts charge at us and knock us away from each other smashing Lapis into the wall while

putting me on my butt. The Amethysts then start beating down on Lapis and I feel my anger rising, my desire to protect/save her kicking in as well. However, Lapis is quick to respond to this newfound danger and starts fending them off with ease with different shaped water weapons. I still begin to move towards her with intentions of helping, but she calls to me to insist otherwise.

"I can handle this! You go and stop Rose!" Lapis says.

I nod and fist pump the air as a sign that I'm routing for her, then turn back and run back towards the fray of battle. Something I notice almost right off the bat is that the Homeworld Army is actually making some good headway against the Crystal Gems and more so, that they're keeping to my direct orders to poof instead of shatter them. Mind you, they don't know how to bubble, but I'll teach them about it when everything's said and done. But, now that I know we're actually showing progress, it's time to end this and track down Rose. Only once the leader is defeated do the Crystal Gems really see that their continued fighting is futile. Thing is though, I can't see Rose with the whole hurricane of swords, spears, and fists going around. But, I quickly think of a way to solve that and jump into the air, using my Diamond powers to hover. I go a good enough distance up to see over the frenzy and as I squint, I see Rose and her little trio of protectors fighting in a circle formation on the clear other end of the arena, directly opposite from where I am. Harnessing the strength I still don't fully understand, I launch myself forward through the air and fly towards the four of them. I get closer and closer every second and just as I'm about to rain down on these fools, I bring my arms back, form shields on each of my fists, then thrust my arms forward as I make contact.

I hit the group of four with the force of a bullet, knocking many of them to the ground and off their feet. Rose gets pushed onto her butt and also drops her sword, making me wondering how she got it back but then thinking it was probably Pearl. The attacking Homeworld gems then move in, kicking and hitting the downed gems. Pearl and Garnet struggle to get up, but Rose an Bismuth prove to be more pain resistant and get up quite easily. However, despite the fact that Rose looks ready to keep fighting, her eyes show that she wants to retreat and pull the Crystal Gems back in

hopes of regrouping and forming a new strategy. She looks to Bismuth and they share a nod, coming to non-verbal terms and move to grab Pearl and Garnet from off the floor. Then, with then all huddled together, Rose makes a break for the way she came in. I already see what she's doing though and as they make it to the overhead archway, I plant a nice hard punch in Rose's back with my shield, sending the four tumbling end over end down the stairs.

The four are rolling so fast that all of them are unable to stop as the edge of the platform approaches. Bismuth is the first to slide over, desperately reaching for something to grab on to, but goes over the edge quickly followed by Garnet and Pearl. Rose is able to steady herself more, but before she can fully stop, I hit her once more with my shield and complete her tumble off the platform and down through the sky. Looking down at the clouds, I know that those four will land in no time and will try to escape if I don't stop them. I then hear footsteps and turn around to see a beaten Jasper, Peridot, and Lapis running up to me. They look to me and then the cloud-covered sky just below us, having obviously seen Rose's posse go over.

"I gotta hunt those four down before they regroup and try to assemble another army. I need you guys to stay here and finish what's left of this army. Then wait here, I shouldn't be long" I instruct.

"Of course" Jasper nods.

"You be careful, Steven" Lapis says with worry.

"Yes, do take care of yourself, will you?" Peridot replies.

I nod and then jump over the side of the platform, descending my way to the final battlefield. Rose and her company thought they could get away, but not while I'm still breathing. It's up to me to end this war and I've known that ever since I arrived in the past. Now it's time to live up to that.

It's time to finish this, once and for all!

A Rose and It's Thorns

Steven's P.O.V

The wind might bite into me with its bitter teeth and the darkness of night may make me feel small and alone, but with the fire inside me of near certain victory, I let all those other things go and let my determination flood my mind. And, even though I hate Rose and want her to pay for all that she's done and could possibly still do, my aim is not to kill her. At worst, she'll be poofed, bubbled, and taken to a particularly familiar place that I'll get to later. As of now, though, I'm so set on stopping Rose here and now that I doubt anything could stop me. There have been a few bumps in the road, but most has gone exactly as I've wanted it to so far. Just this last battle to fight and I better do it fast because my essence fading in and out of reality has gotten continuously worse. If I remain in this timeline much longer, I'll be scattered to the wind whipping at my face and lost among the stars like half of the Avengers after Infinity War. But, I'm determined not to let that happen.

My freefall then comes to an end as I see the tops of the trees approaching rapidly, forcing me to summon my bubble. I then collide with the tall, hulking plants with the force of a punch and feel myself get bounced back and forth while falling even more towards the ground. It's dizzying for sure, but it's better that getting bruised, so I'll just leave it at that. My bubble then slams the ground, leaving a small crater-sized indent in the grassy forest floor. Letting my protection fade away, I stand up strong and confident, exhaling firmly before I begin looking.

Rose and her little trio of rebels for sure fell in this direction, I watched their fall just to be sure, so I can safely confirm that they have to be in this area somewhere. They wouldn't just be standing around in plain sight waiting for me though because after seeing what me and my arm were capable of, those four would be smart to stay out of sight. And the only way to do that would be to hide

among the canopy in hopes that I would pass underneath them and play victim to an ambush attack. You see, they think they can outsmart me, but it's just what they tried to pull before on the Homeworld Army when they first arrived at the Diamond Arena. Rose just doesn't have her hundreds of allies now, so she'll definitely play this move more safe than the other.

Well, might as not wait all day. If I'm going to have any chance drawing them out, I should walk around and scan the environment for clues as to where they landed, if they even crashed into the ground that is. Also, it'll give them a false sense of security, making Rose, Pearl, Garnet, and Bismuth think that I'm not expecting them. I shake some leaves and loose twigs off me, then get right to business and strut down this reasonably looking path between these trees that have plenty of room in between. Luck's on my side this day, and not just because my army dominated hers, but due to the fact that the Sun has just risen, so my path and any clue to the four Crystal Gem's whereabouts are more easily visible to me than compared to if it was nighttime. So far I've found nothing, no Rose-shaped craters or indentations of any kind other than those placed in the ground naturally, but I've only just begun. Can't slack and take to much time though, cause the small group could eventually get tired of waiting for me and just decide to run. I can't and won't have that.

Pressing my hands against the trunks of two trees I squeeze by, my eyes flit around, focusing in on the ground once again. Hmm, no footprints, but why would there be any? It's not like they're stupid and trying to make their direction of movement seem obvious. However, the distribution of leaves up in this small clearing about four feet in front of me seem too crunched and unevenly placed, even for pieces of nature that fall pretty randomly. Showing an outward frown, but smiling on the inside, I trot right into the clearing, bending down once I reach the leaves to further examine them. Yep, the Gems have definitely been here and if I didn't know any better, I bet they're hiding around me right at this very second. Perfect, now I just gotta taunt them and draw them out. Well, here goes nothing.

"I must admit that I'm a tad disappointed, Rose" I call out, hearing

no response other than the rustling of leaves against the wind, "I would've thought that the leader of the Crystal Gem Rebellion had more backbone and not run away like a coward when things didn't go in her favor. Real leaders stand with their armies and fight to the last gem, no matter how grim the situation may be. But, then again, you're not much of a leader anyway, are you, Rose?".

A few twigs snap and my ear twitches. From the direction it came from, I know one of the four is hiding up in the tree directly to my left.

"You must be wondering how the boy you met inside that hole in the Kindergarten turned out to be the cause of your downfall. I would too if I was you. The only thing I'll say about that is...everyone's gotta a secret side to them. A part of themselves that they choose to keep hidden, locked away from the world so that nobody will find out the deep, dark truth of it all. Cause if they do, they'll be frightened of being judged by those around them, afraid of being abandoned and left to fend for themselves in a place that may seem like home but is actually anything but. So you see, we're not so different you and I, me and you".

More twigs snap and some leaves fall off a tree to the southeast of me. Fools think I don't use my peripheral vision, but boy oh boy are they wrong.

"I will admit though that this whole game you played of being this 'hero' was quite amusing to me. The part that drove me away though was the fact that you were willing to lie and manipulate those who you called 'friends' into being your own personal court of allies. Acting just like a Diamond. Real shame what happened to Pink, I wish I could've been there to see it happen. How you shattered her, started this war single-handedly, and simultaneously vowed to shatter any gem that opposed you. I don't know about you, Rose, but all that taken together sounds like a recipe for creating a tyrant. Or more so, a Diamond. Just like the ones you want to fight. Seems to me like you're no better than those you say are worth shatter, so really, are they the true villain here? Or are you?" I finish.

I really pushed them over the edge with that one because I then see

Pearl out of the corner of my eye leap forward from her spot in the canopy, sailing towards me from her southeast position with sabers raised. She's quick to strike, but since I was expecting her, I'm faster and jump while somersaulting through the air, twirling around so that my foot connects with her face at just the right angle to knock her to the ground. She falls on her back, her sabers hitting the ground in both directions while I stick the landing with both feet.

Garnet's the next to attack and shoots up from that tree on my right, the one I first saw signs of movement from. Popping up and out of the treetop, Garnet goes for a strong punch similar to what I did when flying at the group back at the arena. She's fast like Pearl, but not as equally fast, which gives me a slightly bigger window to lean back limbo style as her hit breezes by the spot where my head was a second ago. I then do a partial back flip while kicking her the rest of the way forward and having her get a mouthful of earth as she smacks the ground. Unfortunately, my landing isn't as graceful this go and I land right on my biscuits, pain flaring up but only for a couple seconds. I'm then back on my feet and just in time to dodge some deadly pickax hands swinging my way on behalf of Bismuth.

I lean back to dodge them and at the same time, see her charging out from in between two trees just a couple over from the one Garnet flew out of. She's on me in seconds, being by far the swiftest out of them all, and goes to strike down with both axes hands. I back flip just in time, though, and dodge. Landing on my feet for the second time now, I then summon a shield and throw it Frisbee style at Bismuth's head. It's bounces against her face, stunning her just enough for me to follow up with a forward dash and a Diamond strength-filled punch to her midsection. She back flips backwards through the air and collides with the back of another tree a ways behind her. I then go to look for Rose, seeing as she's the only one left, and as I turn to see if she's running out to meet the challenge, a sword pommel smacks me across the face. I grit my teeth in pain and counter with a shield on the back of my right hand. I then look up to see Rose right there looming over me. The curly haired rebel leader then swings at me again, but this time her blade meets the front of the shield rather than the flesh of my face. Strength meets strength and we struggle to overpower the other.

"Please, Steven, stop this now" Rose says, almost like she's begging me, "Just cease your attacking and I promise none of them will hurt you. It pains me so dearly to have to fight you and I never wanted to imagine that I would have to in the first place".

I can feel her strength lessening a tiny bit, but even that is enough to gain more power over her. I press harder against her blade, seeing her expression change into more of a panicking state, and it's then that I grin and tell her what I think about that.

"You shouldn't let your guard down, Rose, because things like **this** will happen" I say, pushing her back and breaking her push against me at the same time.

I then spin around and bash her across the face with the front of my shield, stunning her enough so that she's unable to stop me from then sweeping under her feet with my right foot, completely knocking her off-balance. I then go and start hitting her back and forth across the face again with my shield, but then someone grabs me from behind and throws me away, my side connecting with a tree trunk. I grunt in agony and then place my hands on the ground to help myself stand back up. Cracking my neck in the process, I square my shoulders and see Pearl helping Rose back to her feet. Garnet and Bismuth then get back up too, both standing on Rose's left while Pearl stands to her right, all of them glaring me down.

"This is your last chance, hybrid! Stand down now and Rose will be merciful" Pearl growls at me.

I huff in exhaustion and return the hateful gaze back at Pearl, then clenching my shaking fists.

"Merciful? Is that what you promised all those gems you shattered, Rose? That you'd be **merciful**? Admit it, you're no savior. You're the true evil, the one that will be the cause of so many deaths that not even you yourself could imagine it. You and your 'allies' here can spew false promises and such all day, but in the end, it's only you or me that's gonna be walking away from here. The only difference between us is that I'll be carrying you out in a bubble and not as shards" I exclaim, thrusting my hands down and forming twin shields on each of them.

Pearl, Garnet, Bismuth, and Rose raise their weapons and simultaneously, we both run right at each other with fire in our eyes and a raging inferno in our souls. Me going against four other opponents might sound kinda stupid, but what the Crystal Gems lack is a thorough understanding of my abilities. They underestimate me because of my short size, believing that I couldn't possibly match them in skill and fighting style. It'll be their downfall. However, with that fact duly in mind, it doesn't change my approach for defeating them. From the way I analyzed it, the situation calls for some back and forth retaliation between multiple opponents at the same time. In other words, I'll have to hit each of em in quick succession and avoid getting hit myself. The kicker though will be poofing them, which will have to happen one by one.

As both their group and mine meet, I swing my arms out and knock both Pearl and Garnet to the side, then kicking Rose in the shin. Dodging a sudden strike from Bismuth, I follow up on Rose with a front flip and a hard kick to the face, sending her back some distance away from the others. This leaves mainly me and Bismuth in action, meaning that she'll be the first to get poofed. The builder gem swings her hand axes at me once more and I bend down to avoid them while turning around staring her down. An enemy like her deals more damage at close range, so if I'm farther away, I'll damage her more then come in for the final blow after she's thoroughly beaten down.

Strength burning inside me, I summon multiple shields and chuck each of them at her at a fast frequency. Bismuth does her best to block them with her axe hands, but it ends up being too overwhelming for her and she gets hit eight or nine times in many different places on her body. Then, dashing up to her, I go to strike at her, which she unsurprisingly catches with her own hand but leaves me room to twist my arm around and work its way out of her grasp. I'm now grabbing onto her arm and using it to play the game of Stop Hitting Yourself with Bismuth, bashing her own axe hands into her face over and over. She then gets more and more weary, exhaustion and dizziness showing themselves all over her body. I then jump up, twist myself in midair, and come down behind her, my arms locked around her neck in a choke hold. Leaning back, I

pull as hard as I can, feeling Bismuth grit her teeth because of the strain. I don't think I can get her to the ground, but as I keep on pulling, I see my arms glow a radiant pink and my power increase. Bismuth's then bent backwards in no time, but as she's stuck in this helpless position I out her in, I seal the deal and use some of this newfound power of mine to throw her backwards and up and over me, landing back first into a tree.

Bismuth's now been beaten down to the point where she's almost too weakened to keep going, an ample opportunity to finish her off. But, as I begin to walk towards her, I feel a sharp sting across my back and fall face first against the ground on behalf of Pearl's sneaky antics. I grunt in frustration and flip myself onto my back, stopping her saber from cutting me again with a well-timed catch between my legs, yanking the weapon out of her grip and sending her her flying back with another kick from the same foot. Then, rolling myself back onto my stomach, I get up and grab the lone saber from the ground. My hours of TV watching then pay off as I hold the saber like a javelin and throw it with the exact force of a spear into Bismuth's front. The builder gem grunts in pain, her form dissipating and leaving her gem behind.

Looking over my shoulder, I see Rose, Pearl, and Garnet recovering, so I rush to the spot where Bismuth's gem lies. My bubble quickly forms around it and I then swipe up to send it to the Diamond Arena, just like all those times when I saw either Garnet or Pearl sending corrupted gems to the burning room inside the Temple. Spinning back around afterwards, I stare the now three remaining opponents. All look at me with shocked expressions, having obviously seen what I did to Bismuth, which also means that they know that's what I have planned for them too. They'll be fighting harder now, and to be honest, I wouldn't have it any other way.

Picking up the saber used to poof Bismuth with, I meet Pearl head on in a crossing of swords. She exchanges parries, thrusts, and other back and forth exchanges with me, going almost too fast that I can't keep up with her. Reminds me of the time when she was training Connie in the ways of knighthood. Thinking about that particular memory though angers me and from that, adds more fuel to this fire inside me, causing me to in turn block harder and counter with

much more strength. Somehow, and I have no idea how she does it, Pearl twirls her blade around mine so quick that she flips it out of my grasp, the saber thudding into an above tree branch. Then, from behind Pearl, Garnet throws a punch my way, showing a clear double team strategy. I do my best to dodge/catch it, but it still knocks me back against the tree. Hurts like hell when I land back-first and I come to the fast realization that to stay alive and stay in the fight, I can't let them back me into these corners, otherwise I'll get pounded.

Picking myself back up, Pearl and Garnet go for another paired attack against me, though I'm ready for them this go around. To counter Pearl, I merely do what she did to disarm me and while she's striking at me, I summon a shield on the back of my right hand and land an underhanded smack upside Pearl's sword hand. The saber flies out of her hand and lands somewhere behind her, but I'm too focused on Garnet to fully notice. The fusion's hit comes from a mile away and to counter her, I simply somersault underneath her, grab her punching arm, and yank her so forcefully down so that she tumbles and crashes face first into the grass. I then deliver a hard kick to Pearl's midsection, sending her backwards and landing right at the spot where the saber I disarmed from her stuck in the ground. Pearl reacquires the sword and charges at me once more, ignoring her downed ally. She then unleashes a flurry of slices at me, trying to desperately get a hit. She does end up getting a cut under my left eye, but that's the most damage she could ever do.

After about the fiftieth dodge or so, I'm miraculously able to catch her sword as it travels toward my face once again. I then surge forward, at the same time, and clamp down on Pearl's sword arm, shaking with muscle strain as I force the point of the saber down, away from me, and back towards her. Pearl shakes and flails to try and stop my efforts, but it's all for nothing cause with my Diamond strength, I easily outmatch her. Her thin arms and little muscles don't end up saving her here, because I once I've forced the sword point as to where it's pointing her waist, I plunge it down and poke right through her. Pearl gasps and goes stiff, her pupils shrinking and her hair spiking up. Her body then glows and dissipates into her gem, the rock hover for a split second before plopping to the

grassed covered ground just like Bismuth's. I lean down to pick it up, but as I'm beginning to form a bubble around it, Garnet charges me like a bull and takes me with her as she barrels a ways diagonal to where we previously stood. I'm almost backed into another tree, but I duck out of Garnet's charge in time and watch as the fusion struggles to slow down before actually hitting the tree. Rolling my eyes at her, I spin my head around to see Rose picking up Pearl's gem and holding onto it in her palm.

I frown and bit my lip, thinking to myself that I have to get her bubbled soon, otherwise Pearl will reform and make another problem for me. However, my focus has to shift to Garner right now, cause she's clearly not done with our little smack down. The question though is how do I match someone in strength that has as much as she does? I mean, yeah, I'm a half Diamond and all, but I've only been able to 'scratch the surface' of my powers as the Gems once told me. Garnet goes to hit me again, but I duck under her swing and deliver an uppercut to her chin. I then try something risky and as the fusion wobbles backwards, I jump in midair and send a barrage of kicks to her face. It keeps her busy for a second, but then Garnet grabs my legs and slams me to the ground. She then pins me down with her knee on my chest and a gauntlet clenching my neck. I grit my teeth and thrash widely but to no avail do I escape. Rose then trots her way over, getting down on her knees to look me right in the eye.

"Out of everyone, Steven, why did it have to be you? I wanted you by my side, rejoicing in the future that I would bring this planet. Instead, you seek to thwart the inevitable. Why?" The false Quartz asks, sounding as though she might burst into tear.

I arch my eyebrows and pant in frustration, angry that she could be so blind to evilness of her actions.

"You bring only death and misery to my home, Rose. You're so set to make this world exactly how you want it to be, but have so little care about those that got caught up in it all. Diabolical really" I growl, my voice strained through Garnet's vise-like grip on my neck.

Rose sighs, shaking her head in apparent disappointment.

"You don't get it, Steven. I don't think you ever will..." Rose says solemnly.

Her words just now echo through my mind, their coldness and harshness striking close to my heart. It's enough to awaken something deep inside myself. A well of power. A source of energy and such raw power that only a Diamond could know. It's been with me this whole time and I never knew how to draw it forward. But when Rose so heartlessly assumed that I'd never know what would happen to my home, that well burst.

And it burst wide.

Clenching my fists so hard they turn white, I grit my teeth and feel myself burning with anger and hatred. Rose and Garnet then grow wide-eyed, a rather bright light shining of them. Looking down, I see that my entire body is glowing a vibrant pink. Garnet, shaking with slight fear, then takes her hand off that was holding my neck and goes to hit me. I'm tired and quite frankly too furious to tolerate her weak attempts. I whip my arm out first and punch Garnet with so much power that she flies backwards through the air and smashes through a tree. Standing up, I turn my arms over, marveling at the energy flowing off them. Rose then tries to catch me while I'm busy looking at myself, but her sword strike gets caught with my thumb and pointer finger.

The tables have turned.

Pressing my fingers together, I shatter the tip of her sword. I then follow with a hard punch to Rose's midsection, which causes her to drop Pearl's gem. Rose is then sent flying like I did to Garnet, her form crashing through a tree. Leaning down, I snatch the pale gemstone off the ground, bubble it, and send it up to the Arena without a second thought. My fury then guides me to summon my shields over my fists and to mold them into the shapes of gauntlets similar to Garnet's, who, by the way, is now wearily picking herself up off the ground. It doesn't do her any good though, because after a hit to the side of her knee and a slam of her head against the ground, the fusion is down. I then grab her by the foot and drag her back into the clearing, dropping her to then get Rose. I find her in a pretty dazed mess, but once I headbutt her in a very Jasper-like

way, she's out of it. Rose is then thrown thrown through the trees and into the center next to the wounded Garnet, staying down long enough for me to walk over in a rather leisurely manner. Both are in so much pain that they can't feel me grab them by their feet and send them sky high.

My newfound strength then brings out yet another new surprise. I feel myself lift off the ground, hovering slightly in the air before I shoot up after Rose and Garnet. I catch up to them almost instantly and, summoning one big shield on my right fist, smack them back down to Earth. The rebel leader and the fusion land hard and from the looks of the two gems resting in Garnet-shaped crater, I'd say number three is out of the game. To consolidate it though, I land quite destructively, leaving a small crater of my own, then walk up to the gemstones, thrust my arms down and surround them with bubbles. The two are then sent on their merry way, leaving only Rose and I left. However, I take a minute and look around, feeling a familiar vibe emanate from this area. Upon pausing, I see a rather interesting pink palanquin sitting crooked a few feet ahead and I smile, glad that this will be place where Rose fails. The leader herself, crumpled in a heap next to the palanquin, slowly rises, using her sword to help prop her up. She then looks at me, desperation finally starting to show in her whole facial expression. Guess she just now realizes how bad things are for her.

I walk towards her, a slow but menacing pace to it, and Rose tries to get the upper hand by rushing me with her sword raised. It's futile and actually stupid and I show her as much when she slices down only for me to grab the blade and destroy it with my raw power. A sliver of it though still remains attached to the pommel and upon picking it up, since she dropped it after it broke, I go to stab her. Rose blocks with her thick arm, stopping the sliver from piercing her body. She doesn't hold it for long though and eventually tires out from all the beating she took from me. However, instead of stabbing her, I hit her with the butt of the sword and send her tumbling into the palanquin, across the floor and into the wall. She now watches in complete fear as I walk up the steps and saunter eerily slow over to her, only speaking when I come to a halt in front of her.

"W-What are you?" Rose shakes.

I sigh, looking down at the broken sword before back up to her.

".....I'm your reckoning" I say, driving the sword home.

Rose freezes, her breath catching and body going stiff. She then glows and dissipates, her Diamond gem clinking to the palanquin floor. Sighing, I let the sword fragment go and go to scoop up the gemstone. I'm keeping her outside bubble for a reason. Because I have plans for her. Very important plans. Turning around, with no intention of looking back, I then walk out of Pink's palanquin, stepping back onto the dirt-covered ground that lay waiting. With no thoughts to speak out loud, I silently gaze down at Rose's/Pink's gem and then up to see the Sun rising. It's a new day and as I promised everyone, including myself, we'd be the only ones claiming victory.

I then clench her gemstone firmly, not wanting to loose it and turn to head in the direction of the Warp Pad. The job is done. Now all that's left is to reunite with the Homeworld Army, check on Jasper, Lapis, and Peridot, and initiate the final phase of my plan.

Taking Rose to Homeworld and presenting her to the three Diamonds.

Altered History Made

Steven's P.O.V

Finding the Warp Pad and heading back to the Arena was quite frankly the easiest thing I've done today. I say it's the easiest because the battles with Rose and the Crystal Gems took a rather draining toll on me, mentally, physically, and emotionally. The weight of it all just makes me want to find a secluded spot, sit against something solid, and breathe slowly while I try to erase the images from my mind. I haven't shattered anyone before, but poofing them is the gateway leading into it. My attitude about this whole situation is pretty flat and straightforward, but that doesn't mean I felt only as much. Deep down, I'm truly conflicted and sad that I had to do this. During my fights with the Gems, memories of all the times we shared together kept coming to mind. It made it so much harder to proceed with everything I've done. Yes, I've told myself that it's the right thing and that it had to be done to move forward, but thinking about it that particular way raises a question within me:

Am I really any different from Rose?

Explanations aside though, I found the Warp Pad that Rose and her Crystal Gems used to get up to the Arena in the first place and launched myself back to where the fight started. Per the norm with how Warp Pads work, I was there before you could say 'Bob's your uncle'. Up the stairs I went with a bit happiness, but also with some inner sorrow, and bounded into the Arena center. I was pleased to note that while a small fraction of the Homeworld Army was poofed, the entire portion of the Crystal Gem army was poofed as well, their gemstones littering the floor. Standing proud and confident from all the rest is my dream team trio of Jasper, Peridot, and Lapis. The third, and by far the most pretty of them all, is first to notice my return. Lapis cries out with joy and glides toward me

with her wings, enveloping me in a hug that nearly knocks me to the floor.

"Steven! I'm so glad you're back! I don't know what I would've done if you had been shattered!" The ocean gem exclaims, her face nuzzling into my neck.

Her touch is very warm and makes butterflies erupt in my stomach, causing a smile to work its way onto my face.

"I'm as equally glad that you're safe and sound too, Lapis" I muse, rubbing up and down her back, brushing over her gem.

Lapis pulls back, due to the contact, and blushes, which brings out a very cute side of her that I never noticed before. It's that side of her that makes me want to kiss her again and I actually begin to lean forward to do it. Lapis is quick to catch on and goes for it to, but Peridot interrupts up.

"Well, look who came back completely unharmed!" Peridot says in her snarky tone, standing cross-armed beside us.

We both freeze and move back, not wanting Peridot to see what we were going to do. Lapis justs bites her lip in disappointment, but I'm feeling in too good a mood to squander in this change, so I walk over to Peridot and spread my arms open for an incoming hug. She grows thin-lipped, but blushes nonetheless.

"Don't act like you don't want them" I tease, winking at her that causes the tech gem's cheeks to darken further.

She relents and I squeeze her tightly around her short, slim waist. Her body feels stiff at first to my touch, but slowly Peridot relaxes into it and slinks her arms over my shoulders and down behind my back, resting her chin on my head. It takes a bit, but even someone as hardened as her can't help but smile. It makes her look cute too. I keep at it for just long enough that Peridot feels comfortable and at peace, but after a nice healthy does of love and affection, I separate and step back, giving her room to breathe. Lapis then comes up behind me and puts a helping hand on my shoulder. I smile, loving how these gems right here are just the best companions that I a

hybrid like me could ask for. The only one who could complete this picture, though, has yet to join the huddle, but eventually the buff gem works her way over from the crowd of the Homeworld Army and comes to a halt on Peridot's right.

"You fought well, tiny Diamond. I must admit that I had my doubts that we'd be victorious today, but now I deeply regret thinking those thoughts. Forgive me" Jasper confesses.

"What matters most right now is our victory, Jasper" I say firmly, reassurance as my goal, "The efforts of the Homeworld Army, combined with the strength and ambition you three put into it, in the end, was the ultimate tipping point in this whole battle. I would advise to not mull on the past, for it can bring you only more fighting inside yourself of whether something was right or wrong as to what you did, but the deciding factor really isn't up to me. Remember that".

She nods, then looking down at my hand that was clenching onto Rose's gem.

"What have you got there?" The orange quartz inquires.

I grin, proud to show off what I did, but also curious as to what they'd think of it.

"Oh, just a Rose Quartz gem ready for delivery" I say nonchalantly, tossing the gemstone up and down in the air leisurely like a boy might with his baseball.

Lapis and Peridot are thoroughly surprised, their expressions full of shock, but Jasper merely smirks and nods, her being the more understanding gem out of them all.

"You..defeated..Rose Quartz?!" Peridot struggles to say.

"And her trio of the Bismuth, fusion, and the Pearl" I add.

Peridot's mouth hangs agap but she's quick to close it and not risk any flies getting up in there. Recomposing herself, the tech gem adorns her self-confident attitude once more.

"Well then, let it said that I'm glad you led this fight, Steven" Peridot replies.

I nod and after glancing at both the gemstones on the Arena floor along with those suspended in midair, I get straight down to business on the next course of action.

"Great. Now, it's time to move onto the last part of the plan. Now, since I asked you and the Army to poof and not shatter these gems, it's best that I now show you how to bubble them. Also, before you ask, the meaning behind bubbling these gems is to basically keep them from reforming until the Diamond's have the final say on their fate, just like what's going to happen with Rose. That leads into the second part of the remainder of the plan, which is to take Rose to Homeworld and have her answer for her crimes to the three Diamonds themselves. That clear to everyone?" I explain, waiting for their responses.

To my surprise, all three nod in understanding, leading me to think that this will be easier than I anticipated.

"A mighty fine and honorable plan, Steven" Lapis comments, "But first, can you teach us the ways of this 'bubbling' process?".

Smiling, I take her hands in mine, briefly dropping Rose's gem while simultaneously making the water gem blush.

"It's what I'm here for, Lapis" I reply playfully, swiping Rose's gem off the floor and striding past the trio to walk down where the Homeworld Army has gathered.

Being careful not to step on any gemstones, I come to a spot where I can see everyone and they can see me. Jasper, Lapis, and Peridot form an arc behind me, showing their definite devotion towards me as the other gems take note. All wait and listen patiently and once I'm sure the entire crowd is ready to hear my instructions, I begin.

"First off, I want to say that together, you gems created the best, toughest, and strongest army I've had the pleasure of knowing. It was an honor to fight beside you all and I hope to do it again someday if the need arises. Now, I need you all to lend me your

ears, metaphorically speaking, for a minute or so further because I am going to teach you how to capture these gems in an orb-sized energy field that'll prevent them from reforming. And, before you all protest about shattering them instead, may I remind you that we do not have the right/privilege to play judge, jury, and executioner. Our Diamonds will decide their fate and keeping them contained in the meantime will ensure that each is dealt with fair and equally" I tell them all.

No one speaks out in protest, so I then bend down and snatch a gemstone off the ground, it evidently being an Amethyst.

"Now, everyone grab a gem and do exactly as I do" I order, watching them mirror my previous action, "Hold the gemstone in both of your hands and concentrate. Envision a bubble forming around it, encasing the gemstone in its own little prison".

The soldiers close their eyes and scrunch their faces up to show that they're in deep concentration. For most, the bubble actually forms, surprisingly. The others that aren't as fortunate for the first try, I tell them to try again and to concentrate harder. Turns out that strategy works just fine and those who struggled got their bubbles created. About twenty or so more Crystal Gem gemstones remained after the initial collection, but a spare handful of the Homeworld Army got right on it and bubbled them after they concluded with their first go at bubbling. It made me so proud to see how quickly these gems could learn something new, not that I thought they couldn't. Looking down at Rose's/Pink Diamond's gem in my hand, I figure that since I talked all about this bubbling stuff, I'd throw my hat into the ring, again metaphorically speaking, and keep her contained until the time is right. In a split second or two, a pink bubble from yours truly envelopes the shiny rock, suspending it inside the spring confines. I then turn and glance at my trio of most reliable allies.

"By any chance do any of you have a Diamond communicator on you?" I ask curiously.

"No" Jasper bellows.

"Nope" Lapis says, shaking her head.

"Not at the moment, no" Peridot replies.

"It's ok, I was just wondering" I respond truthfully, my mind switching to the second option, "I was asking because getting an audience with the Diamonds won't be an easy picking. The best way to talk to a Diamond, if you're not already on Homeworld, is through these devices. Since none of you have any on your persons, I do happen to know where one is right now".

"Really? Where?" Peridot inquires. I grin.

"Have any of you visited the moonbase?"

~~ A Short Time Later... ~~

"This..." I say, gesturing all around me as I lead the group up the winding stairs toward the top, "...is where Pink Diamond ran all of Earth's operations from. What we're looking for though is the Diamond communicator, which is conveniently located in the throne of Pink Diamond on the uppermost level of this base. Just stick with me and we'll surely find it".

Jasper, Peridot, and Lapis are utterly silent, entranced in the majestic structures that make up the moonbase. Guess Yellow or Blue don't have these, or at least haven't brought these particular gems with them on their colonization 'retreats', because it's very much apparent that they haven't seen a place such as this before. I give them some time to take it all in, going on ahead to the upper level and letting them lag behind me to gaze at the murals of their Diamonds. The space is just like I last remember it, which in truth wasn't that long ago, the only difference being the lack of a Pearl and a Pink Diamond.

Strutting up to the throne like a Diamond myself, I sit down on the hard but smooth seating surface and search around for a place that this communicator can eject, cause I know from my past memory of Peridot smuggling it off the moonbase that it's small enough to be portable. After some button pressing and fidgeting around with the various functions, I finally get the thing to pop out from one of the

arms on the throne, swiping the device and getting up swiftly out of frustration because of how long I had to fiddle with that fricken piece of machinery. Right when I'm about to leave and go back down the steps though, the voices of my companions grow clearer and louder and soon enough, they themselves appear over the lip of the stairs. The three quickly spot me and trot on over, getting a nice good look at the diamond-shaped device I hold in the hand opposite of the one holding Rose's bubble.

"Ever seen one of these before?" I ask them all, turning it over this way and that.

"No" Jasper and Lapis reply, leaving Peridot the only one to offer a different view.

"Yes, but quite rarely. My Diamond prefers communication through open channels and not so much with what she considers 'outlier' channels" The green gem describes.

I nod halfheartedly, gazing down at the object with curious intent on how to activate it. But, now that I think about, Peridot had to twist the top a certain way to get it to work. I guess I should do that for starters. I pinch the pointed tip of the device and begin turning it like the cap on a soda bottle. The others frown, wondering what I'm doing.

"What are you doing, Steven?" Lapis asks.

"Well, if we want to set up a meeting/trial with your superiors, we gotta at least let them know we're coming rather than just show up and expect an audience. It's always polite and is frankly just more convenient for everyone" I explain, my eyes glued to the communicator as I rotate the top another ninety degrees.

I must've gotten it right somehow because as soon as I finish my sentence, the device begins humming and leaps from hands, floating in midair. Slowly, light protrudes and elongates into a diamond shape, just like the screens that the Diamonds operate on themselves. I wave my friends over and they stand beside me, watching as an image coalesces. I already know who's going to answer, but Yellow Pearl still gives me cause to smile as she appears

on the screen.

"This is the Yellow Diamond control room" Her stern voice answers, "Who authorized you to make this call?".

"I did" I say, crossing my arms while giving her a half-lidded look.

Yellow Pearl raises a critical eyebrow at me.

"And what makes you think that you have the privilege to access the direct Diamond communication channel?" She questions.

I then smirk and toss the bubble with Rose's gem up in the air. The Pearl catches the movement and her eyes widen from realization.

"Tell me that isn't.." Yellow Pearl gasps.

"Yes, the leader of the Crystal Gem Rebellion and the gem that shattered Pink Diamond. Rose Quartz herself" I rather proudly.

Yellow Pearl's demeanor has now changed, having a slightly more eager vibe to her. I can tell she's anxious to present this to her Diamond.

"And what is it that you're wanting? Obviously you're wanting something" She says, giddiness hinting in her tone.

"Well, Pearl, I was wondering if you could let Yellow Diamond know that me and my allies here are going to be arriving on Homeworld shortly with Rose Quartz in our possession. What we'd like is hand over Rose to her so that Yellow Diamond can have the pleasure of dealing with the traitor herself" I reply, using some twisted vocabulary to be more persuasive.

Yellow Pearl grins widely, visibly shaking.

"It will be done" She says, ending the call shortly there after.

The diamond-shaped screen vanishes and leaves me to turn around, smiling victoriously at my friends.

"I think that went well. Now, let's not wait for the grass to grow and

head on over to Homeworld to get Rose her just deserts" I announce.

The others match my grin, along with my eagerness, and do not hesitate to follow me as I head directly for the stairs. We make it down and to the Warp Pad in record time, not even pausing before the Warp Stream whisks us away to the Galaxy Warp. We have to stop here because it's the only Pad that has the range to reach Homeworld, but in retrospect, the effort to switch Pads is little to nothing. The group and I hop onto the larger Warp Pad and immediately are sent into the sky and beyond. While the time it takes to make it to Homeworld is short, at least to me, I pause in the moment and look around me to fully appreciate the gravity of the situation.

I made it here and it's because of these gems right here that I'm as far along in this conquest as I am. Without them, the aid of White Diamond, and everyone's cooperation, I'd doubt anything that's happening right now could be possible. Taking out my phone, I snap a quick picture of our little squad, quickly pocketing it after. Moments like this and when I showed them the beauties of Earth are meant to be cherished and held close to my heart. Life won't go on hold just for you enjoy them over and over again so it's better if you appreciate what's in front of you while it's there. It's especially true for me. The way I've changed things here and considering how much I've changed, I don't know if I'll even be around much longer. The pains of fading from existence have gotten stronger, almost to the point where it's hard to walk, talk, or think. What keeps me going though is the thought of everyone living in a future free from corruption, lies, hate, and bloodshed. And that's good enough for me.

"Steven" Lapis speaks, pulling me from my thoughts, "We've arrived".

And indeed we have. The sparkling expansive gem metropolis of Homeworld lays out before us in all it's dominating glory. A city the size of a planet. Ships fly all around the airspace, their abundance matched only by the gems on our ground level. Said gems are hard at work doing a variety of tasks that I couldn't name even if I tried. The buildings and skyscrapers leer down at us from their tall

heights, making me feel as if they're analyzing me. But, whatever. We came here for a reason and the time for pausing to admire these things is drawing to a close.

"You're right, let's go!" I reply at last.

Our group marches down from the Warp Pad and gets immediately caught up in the crowd of Homeworld gems bustling around. Jasper, with her strength and overbearing endurance, keeps us on track by non-literally swatting away those who get too close. Past that, we stride on into the lower and more poorly lighted areas of the planet. Not too far down this path is a platform that, once we stand on it, lifts us up to a diamond-shaped (obviously) door in the side of a massive spire. The door opens once our platform settles and surprisingly, it's White Pearl that greets us with her unsettling t-posing.

"White Diamond has been expecting you, Steven" The eerie voice of the Pearl says, being better than the welcome I was guessing we'd get.

White Pearl then spins around, without moving I might add, and hovers away down a corridor leading from this entryway. Looking back at the others, who are pretty spooked, I shrug and follow after the scary servant. The door closes a minute later and only by the sound of their footsteps do I know that Jasper, Lapis, and Peridot have stuck by me. The path is dark and quiet, bringing an anxious level of intensity to our whole walk. Makes me scared, to tell you the truth, especially with White Pearl being the only real light source. Her bright form helps define where the walls are, ensuring that I won't make a fool of myself by running into them. A couple times I peer back at my friends. They appear to be in just a nervous state as me. The stuff that I'm leading them into is like a whole new ballgame. I mean, winning against a threat like Rose, taking her to Homeworld, and presenting her to the three most powerful and important beings in the galaxy? Clearly not something you do everyday. White Pearl then comes to a halt, almost making me run into her. My friends stop too and we watch as the ghostly pale servant spins around once more.

"If you'll follow me, the gathering has just about begun" She says, a

large white bubble encasing us all.

After today, I'm gonna have to take a break from bubbles and Warp Pads. I've seen more of these in the past three weeks than I have in my entire life. Anyway, the bubble sinks through the dead-end wall we came up to and a split second later, emerges. Only until the bubble disperses do I see a hauntingly familiar sight. We're in the trial room. The same one I was in when I was brought to Homeworld after Aquamarine and Topaz attacked. The nostalgia is overbearing and I feel my heart rate rising because of it. Lapis then puts her hand in mine, squeezing it for comfort. I mentally thanked her for it and once again watched as White Pearl hovered over to the middle of the room. I then see the yellow and blue diamonds on the floor glow brightly. From said brightness, Yellow Pearl and Blue stand, each in a pose that would seem like they came from a drama play.

"All rise for the luminous Yellow Diamond" Yellow Pearl announces.

"...And the lustrous Blue Diamond" Blue Pearl adds, bowing.

The diamond insignia's on the floor light up once more and, as if it were deja vu, Yellow and Blue Diamond appear. Blue isn't resting on Yellow's shoulder this time though, which gives me some small amount of reassurance that history isn't repeating itself. Both spot us instantly, Yellow looking down with crossed arms while Blue holds one hand over the other in a V shape over the front of her dress.

"Oh, there they are" Yellow says, sounding annoyed.

"I understand that you wanted to speak to us about something important?" Blue asks, her voice soft but still demanding as she looks for confirmation from us.

"Very much so, my Diamond" I say, making sure to be respectful, "It's about Rose Quartz".

"Why doesn't that surprise me?" Yellow groans, pinching the bridge of her nose.

Blue bites her lip, the news about Pink getting 'shattered' probably still fresh in her mind.

"What about it?" The Diamond asks, her voice pained.

"Well, what you say if I told you that I happen to have caught her and am now in possession of her gem?" I say, keeping my arms behind my back so they can't see the bubble.

"I'd say that's a bold claim, little human" Blue answers.

I put a smile on and slowly pull the bubble out in front of me. Blue gasps and Yellow's eyes widen.

"Not so bold that it can't be true" I say, tossing the bubble up before catching.

Yellow Diamond then clenches her fists and develops a sly smirk.

"Well, you've certainly done a great service to the Diamond Authority by capturing this murderer and bringing her to us. I assume there's something you want from this, right?" She guesses.

"Only that she be brought to justice for everything she did. Other than that, I'll just be on my way" I reply simply.

Yellow nods and Blue forms a smile on her face as well. It's quite a beautiful sight.

"Tell me, what is your name, human?" Blue asks kindly.

"Steven" I answer.

"Ste-van. A rather interesting name for a human. Well, Steven, on behalf of both Yellow and myself, I thank you for detaining this traitor. Now, please hand her over and she'll be shattered" Blue continues.

"Sure thing" I grin, about ready to blow their minds.

I then pop the bubble with one finger, the gemstone falling to the ground with a 'clink'. It then starts glowing, the reform process

having already begun. Blue and Yellow look alarmed, but I hold up a hand to calm them somewhat.

"Don't worry, she's not going to attack. After all, I broke her sword and she'll be too discombobulated to use her shield" I state calm but firm.

"Then what's the point of this?" Yellow demands, her anger rising.

"To show you something I found out about Rose. A secret that she kept hidden from everyone. That is, until I came across her" I say cryptically.

Rose's form glows brightly, her outline almost finished, but the very interesting fact about it is that she doesn't have the shape of Rose.

She has the shape of Pink Diamond.

When the light dies and all of our eyes readjust, before us stands none other than Pink Diamond herself, looking confused as all hell. The shock hits everyone really fast, as I expected it to, but Blue and Yellow are the most affected by it.

"What is this? Is this some sort of trick?" Yellow growls.

"Pink! Oh, Pink, you're alive!" Blue cries.

"Rose Quartz was my Diamond this whole time?" Jasper says in disbelief.

"Wow. How unorthodox for Diamond" Peridot states in her snarky tone.

"Unbelievable" Lapis mutters.

"Where am I?" Pink asks.

I tap on her shoulder and she stiffens, turning slowly to see me, which causes her face to contort in shock.

"Remember me, Pink? Or should I say, Rose Quartz?" I say menacingly.

"WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?!" Yellow shouts, making everyone in the room, including Blue, stop in their tracks.

Pink somehow turns back around and begins shaking visibly at the sight of both Blue and Yellow Diamond looking down at her.

"Y-Yellow?" Pink stutters nervously.

"HAVE YOU BEEN THIS REBELLIOUS GEM THE WHOLE TIME, PINK?!?!?" Yellow demands furiously.

Almost like she's undergoing a seizure, Pink nods hesitantly.

"WHY WOULD YOU DO SUCH A THING?" Yellow nearly screeches.

Pink trembles, looking ready to cry. Blue then places a hand on Yellow's shoulder, getting the furious Diamond to calm down just a smidge. The two then summon their thrones and sit down, their disappointed glances directed right at my mother.

"This is the most unacceptable thing you've done, Pink. I just can't believe you" Blue says, shaking her head.

Pink lowers her head, staring at the floor.

"Not looking so tough now are you, Pink?" I gloat.

Blue and Yellow then turn their gazes back to me.

"Tell me the truth. Who sent you to capture Pink here?" Yellow questions, her voice calmer but still angry.

"I did" a voice says suddenly.

Nearly everyone recognizes that eerie tone and sure enough, from the light of her diamond insignia, White Diamond enters. Taking a few steps forward, this giant stadium light, summons her throne too and sits between Blue and Yellow, an appreciative smile directed at me.

"I had heard that my Starlight was up to her games again and allowed this human, along with the Peridot beside him, to deal with her before

she became a problem" White Diamond explains.

Blue frowns while Yellow nods, White then turning her attention to Pink.

"Oh, little Starlight. You've been very bad this time. A suitable punishment will be dispensed as soon as we discuss the severity of your actions. Guards, take her to the Tower so that she may think about what she's done" She smiles.

Two Topazes then enter and escort Pink Diamond out of the room with a phasing bubble.

The room is then quiet for a minute before the Diamond break out in conversation. It fades to the background for me though, because right now I'm so caught up with my emotions that I can't focus on anything else. I'm glad that Pink's getting what she deserves, but then again, I want her to know what I've had to deal with due to her actions as well. Is is suddenly selfish of me to want to explain myself to her? I ponder this intently, but am then interrupt by Lapis. From the look she's giving me, she clearly understands what I want to do.

"You want to go after her, don't you?" The water angel guesses.

I nod, biting my lip. Lapis then smiles and leans in to briefly peck my cheek.

"Then let that give you confidence" She says.

I hold my clenched fist up, grinning as Peridot and Jasper enter the conversation.

"I've trusted you thus far and you've never led me astray yet, Steven. I trust that you'll do what is right" Jasper bellows, a smile hinting at her lips.

"Indeed, go tell off that clod" Peridot grins.

"Hey, that's still my Diamond" Jasper warns.

"Oh yeah, for how long? You'll probably get reassigned here soon"

Peridot counters.

"Why, you little!..." Jasper threatens.

The two keep arguing, but I've tuned them out as well. Lapis gives me one last hug for support and then lets me go. I walk to where Pink and the Topazes vanished, but then realize that they left in a bubble. As I begin to wonder how I'll get to the Tower without a bubble, a familiar large white one begins forming around me. Looking over my shoulder, I see White smile and wink at me. I wave a thanks to her and let the bubble envelop me fully before sinking through the wall and down towards the Tower.

Time to explain everything. And I mean, everything.

His Reasons Why

~~ At the Tower.... ~~

Steven's P.O.V

As I'm escorted down the long, lavish halls by the Topaz soldier, I can't help but smile. I did it! I won! And now, Pink will face the full extent of my wrath and learn how her actions have more reality to them than she could ever conceive. I'm a bit nervous about this, but at the same time, I'm excited too. It's weird, but I am who I am. The Topaz soon stops, gesturing towards a diamond-shaped door on my right. As expected, it's colored pink, so I know I'm in the right place. After her being forcefully escorted away from our little meeting with the other Diamonds, Pink was more than likely tossed inside and told to "sit there and think about what you did". It'd almost be funny if she got nap time privileges taken away too, but I can't really compare Pink to a toddler. She's more of a whiny, temperamental two year-old.

Swallowing down my hesitation, I give the 'go ahead' nod to the Topaz and she very kindly opens the door. It slides into the ceiling, like any futuristic alien space prison would, and I stride very confidently inside. As I do, I spot Pink cowering up against the far wall. She quickly notices me, though I doubt she can see my face because of me being in the light.

"Steven?!" Pink exclaims, her voice a mixture of fear and anger.

I grin, happy to know that I can make her react like such.

"Hello, Pink" I reply flatly.

The door then slides down back into place, encasing us both in darkness, though with the meager light from the window, I'm still

able to make out her form. It's trembling and crawling to her right, my left.

"H-How could you do this to me?" Pink stutters, "I was so close. So close to making a world that would be liberated from Homeworld and a safe haven for those that don't fit in with their standards...".

"Oh, I know..." I say, watching her slink across the wall, "Believe it or not, I once wished for the same thing. Freedom for all and a fresh start for those who were previously rejected. It was something I believed in for my whole life."

"THEN WHY DID YOU RUIN EVERYTHING?!" Pink screams, suddenly running at me.

Sighing, I wait for the right moment and as she's about to attack, I sidestep and trip her. Pink crashes to the ground, not noticing that I've slipped into the shadows. Once she's back on her feet though, all she can hear is my voice coming from somewhere within the room.

"Because I then found out the truth about you. I learned that Pink Diamond, or Rose Quartz if you'd prefer, was not the shining, magnificent, spinning image of perfection that Gems and humans would bow down to worship. No, you're nothing but a selfish, little liar that isn't afraid to manipulate others into sacrificing themselves for the sake of your own personal gain" I tell her.

"What? What do mean 'personal gain'? I did this so that my Crystal Gems could live in a world where they can be themselves without having the worry of being shattered!" Pink exclaims, looking around to try and find me.

What she doesn't know is that I'm hidden in the corner opposite her, grinning and laying out all that I feel.

"Really? And what about those Gems that were created to serve you? You seemed to have no problem denying them any sort of chance for freedom. Would you have shattered me too when you felt like I wasn't helping you anymore?" I argue, actual sadness welling up in my voice.

"Stars, no! I would never do that to you! How could you even think that that would be something I'd do?" Pink cries, tears forming under her eyes.

I almost feel the need to take pity on her. But, no. She needs to hear it all. Hear what she did to her little 'safe haven' after she died.

"Don't act like it didn't cross your mind" I reply firmly, "I don't want to think that way either, but after learning the lengths you will go to, I don't have any trust that you wouldn't kill me in my sleep if it means your rebellion lasts another day. If I'm to be completely honest though, I almost wish you would've ended me. Then, I wouldn't have to be burdened with this pain I face every day of my life and know that I'm just the offspring of a murderer".

"Offspring?" Pink asks confused.

I silently facepalm myself and walk a bit forward, still not entirely visible yet.

"Right, I should start from the very beginning. My name is Steven, last name Universe" I say, stepping into the light where Pink spots me, "You don't me as well as you think you do, I can tell, and that's because I'm not from this period in time. I come from the future, 6,000 years in the future to be exact".

"And you're my son? From the future?" Pink questions, stepping forward slightly.

"Yes. And unlike what you would foresee in that pretty little head of yours, the future is not a pleasant one. I get up everyday and get ridiculed about trying to be just like you. I wanted to be like you at one point, but after I forced Pearl to tell me the truth about you, I abandoned any reason to emulate you" I explain, my eyes locked onto her.

"You make it seem like I'm a bad person, Steven. As my son, I'm sure Pearl told you why I did what I did. The Diamonds don't care about your planet, they'd rather hollow it out and extinguish all life that isn't their own. I formed the Crystal Gems because I had my eyes open to the truth. And the truth is that Blue, Yellow, and

White won't ever change, so they'll never be able to see Earth like I do. In order to secure the freedom of my Crystal Gems, some had to be shattered to prevent the shattering of many more" Pink talks sweetly.

"You see, that's your problem right there, **Mother**" I say, gritting my teeth, "You think that you're better than the other Diamonds, but in reality, you're worse than them. You lied to the Crystal Gems and made them believe that they were fighting for a just cause, even though it was only for your selfish reasons. The Diamonds can be cold and emotionless sometimes, that I'll agree with, but that doesn't mean that they don't care about you. In my future, I came across Yellow and Blue on multiple occasions and each time they consistently talked about you. How they missed you and wondered what you would've thought about what they were doing. So you see, the Diamonds aren't all that you claim them to be, Pink. If they care about as much as I described, then Blue, Yellow, and White can certainly change".

Pink Diamond is silent, clearly absorbing it all. That's good, because it means that she's actually taking this seriously. Pink then sits down with her legs crossed, her rhombus-shaped pupils gazing hard into mine. Now that she's knows about the Diamonds, I feel like she should hear the life I have to live because of her actions.

"Now that you understand that, let me tell you what would've happened had I not intervened. You would've won the rebellion, with too great a cost of lives, and lived on Earth for many years. You will lie to Garnet, Bismuth, and Amethyst about who you are and what you stood for, making them believe that they could go as far as to shatter the Diamonds to keep your little 'family' together. Then, after thousands of years, you'd find this human that will interest you above all others. You will realize that the feelings for each other are not just another of your games and take the relationship seriously, something you clearly don't do enough of. You then decide to have me, but must give up your form to do so. What follows is the best part. Keeping up alright?" I ask, Pink nodding, "Good. What's next is what I had to deal with because of you. You, Pink Diamond, left me, your son, to deal with your problems and it's because of that that I've been nearly killed on

many occasions. Pearl and Garnet, ever since I was born wanted me to lead the Crystal Gems and be as 'perfect' as you. I'm saying 'perfect' with quotation marks because I'm being obviously sarcastic about it. I never got a choice with the decision though, and was trained to be just like you. I never could be just like you though and Pearl and Garnet were always disappointed in me. Looking back at it now, I really wish I could've let em have it, but nothing I can do about that now. But, throughout my life, Pearl and Garnet would lie to me and act selfishly, saying that they love me when I know they don't. The only reason they even pretend to care about me is because of my Gem and that it's the only piece of you that was left."

"Steven, you know that's not true" Pink muses, her voice a near whisper, "Pearl and Garnet just wanted what was best for you. I would never want you to have to bear the knowledge of what I had to do to keep Homeworld off Earth".

"That's no excuse!" I argue with her, "Above all else, when I asked them about you, all they did was keep their mouths shut and continue to lie to me. Me, your own child, who has the right to know anything about you more than anyone else! It's because of them that a very angry Jasper, a whole Ruby squad, a snarky Peridot, an Aquamarine with two Topazes, and many other Homeworld Gems kept coming to my home to kill me! And the worst part? They thought I was you! I had to even give up myself to save the Gems at point! I let myself get taken to Homeworld and be put on trial in front of Blue and Yellow Diamond! They almost killed me too, all because they were under the influence that I was you! All my life, I've been hunted because 'I'm Rose Quartz, the murderous leader of the Crystal Gems and the Gem that shattered Pink Diamond'! After finding out who you really were, *Mother*, I knew that I'd almost certainly never forgive you for not just what you did to me but to all those that were shattered and corrupted because of your actions!!"

"Corrupted!" Pink exclaims, putting a hand over her mouth, "How could that ever happen?!"

"Well, after the Rebellion was getting too out of hand, Blue, Yellow, and White launched a collective beam of their power against the planet in hopes of eliminating the threat once and for all. Above all

else though, they were furious about 'Pink Diamond' getting 'shattered' and couldn't bear to have any reminder of what was supposedly done to you" I explain, "But, you wouldn't have cared. You would just frolic around the planet with the Gems and keep lying to anyone else that gets close to you. Part of me wishes that you and the rest of the Gems should've been shattered by the Diamonds a long time ago. Especially after Garnet".

"Why? What's wrong with Garnet? The fusion is very nice and loving the last time I checked" Pink asks confused.

"Sure, she may seem like a good gem now, but give her a couple thousand years with you and she'll just become a bad person. Split apart, Ruby and Sapphire are not that different. Both only care about each other and not about me. Did you know that when I found out the truth about you that those two were heartbroken? But not for themselves and not for me! They only chose to focus on that their 'relationship was based on a lie' and never gave me the chance to cope with this revelation. I don't think it's wrong for me to feel wronged by that!" I tell her, "Now tell me, do you think gems like Ruby and Sapphire ever wonder what it's like to be someone like me? No, they don't."

I then collapse to the ground, my energy fading and my existence slowly erasing itself. Pink cautiously crawls over and gasps in surprise as I fade in and out of reality, my whole body glitching out. She carefully puts a hand on my shoulder, to which I stiffen immediately and glare up at her. I'm too tired to keep it up though, so I sigh with exhaustion and look down at my feet.

"Oh my stars! What's happening to you, Steven?" Pink asks, sounding genuinely concerned.

I take a deep, shaky breath and tell her.

"Things that have transpired are not as they were meant to happen. Due to me coming here and all that followed because of it, the timeline has been altered. So much that I'm fading away because I won't exist anymore as events continue to unfold in the manner they have thus far" I relay to the Diamond.

My body glitches again, in and out many times before I stabilize. I'm sure if I looked in a mirror that I'd see dark circles forming under my eyes. Pink looks scared, her body trembling. Wow, maybe she does care about me after all.

"Is there some way to fix it? I-I'll do anything I can!" Pink stutters.

Tilting my head to the side just a bit, I give her a pleading look, since that's really all I can muster.

"Explain everything to the Diamonds" I say.

Pink freezes, her hands rubbing over each other in fear. She looks away from me, probably scared of thinking how it would go if she went through with it.

"I-I don't think I can, Steven" Pink admits, clearly frightened, "They hate me now after all I've done. They'll never listen to me again!".

"No, you must!" I groan, reaching over with my waning strength and getting her to look at me, "This all began with you, so you have to be the one to finish it! Back in my timeline, I was the only thing holding the Gems together. You can change that. You change everything, even the Diamonds. All that I ask is that you try."

Pink's eyes flit back and forth between mine. I can see the pain of having to watch me slowly die in her pupils. Her lips are drawn in a tight line, meaning she's clearly distressed. The tension then eases, surprisingly, and she smiles, holding one side of my face. Pink then makes a bold move and kisses me on the head, raised eyebrows being my response.

"You're right, Steven. The time for games is over and it's time I do what's really right. May I be shattered today or not, I'm proud to have met you, my future son. Without you, I never would've known how things would really be after the rebellion. Now I do, and I'll have to change many things assuming I make it out of this" Pink says with a bit more confidence.

"Thanks...Mom" I sigh happily.

Pink smiles and just then, the tower door opens, revealing two tall

and buff-looking Amethysts. Looks like our time together has drawn to a close.

"Pink Diamond, your presence is required by Blue, Yellow, and White Diamond. Follow us" They say in unison.

Pink nods and gets up, trailing after the Amethysts as they head away from the door. I soon follow them, but as I feel the door shutting closed behind me, I know that even if I die today too, something good has finally come my way.

I don't hate my mother anymore. And now I just wish we had more time together.

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As Pink is escorted down the halls of the Diamond Palace, I can't help but wonder what her punishment will be like. You know she's gonna get it pretty bad, considering that the rebellion failed in this altered timeline, but since Yellow, Blue, and White are still fairly unpredictable in their actions, I can't help but internally shudder at how severe they'll punish my mom. Due to her being a Diamond herself, the standards to which Pink was held to are, by far, so much higher than any other gem. With that in mind, and how extremely far she went, the only hope Pink has is to appeal to her sisters on how she'll grow up and take responsibility for what she did. Being in Pink's place would have me worried and scared for my life, but standing behind her while she's silently being led to a near certain hell is just as nerve-wracking for me.

Our little entourage then stops, the guards halting in place as if it were planned beforehand. Nothing's really special about where we stopped, the hallway being your usual run-of-the-mill corridor, but when a now familiar white bubble begins to coalesce around us, I quickly put two and two together. In a matter of seconds, Pink, the Amethysts, and I are fully enveloped and lifted off the ground. No doubt the Diamonds have decided Pink's fate by now, because otherwise they wouldn't have sent the Amethysts. No sooner had we lifted off than we touch back down again, the obvious knowledge of where we are but the curiosity of what's to happen making the mood that much more suspenseful. The bubble fades
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instantaneously, but then the Amethyst guards step back from me and Pink to be excused from the room with yet another bubble around them. Now only her and I remain along with the Diamonds, who are staring at us from across the room. All three wait silently and mostly patient, the outlier being Yellow. Even I know it's not best to keep people like them waiting, so I nudge my mother forward ever so gently. The two of us go to stand directly in front of the Homeworld rulers, wondering who will speak first.

"After some debate between us, we've decided that your punishment will be as follows. Earth is no longer your colony. I will take ownership of the planet for the time being until something more permanent is thought of. Your rebellious allies will be promptly shattered because such treasonous actions are unacceptable. And lastly, you will spend 3,000 years in the Tower so you can reflect on the severity of your wrongdoings. Do anything other than we expect from you in regards to this and the consequences will worsen. Do you understand me, Pink?" Blue Diamond states firmly.

My mother nods, her head bowed and her arms clasped together in front of herself.

"Needless to say that we're extremely disappointed in this show of behavior, Pink" Yellow adds, her voice its usual flat and firm, "I would've thought that all we've taught you would've at least sunk in a little bit rather than just go in one ear and out the other. Alas, that seems to be exactly what this is".

Again, Pink remains silent, which White picks up on.

"Well, Starlight, have you anything to say for yourself?" The star-headed monarch asks.

Looking down, I see Pink's twisting her foot this way and that, a blank but somber expression painted on her face. She's trying to pick her next words carefully, knowing full well that the Diamonds won't be quick to accept her word on anything, especially after this massive show of lying.

"I'm sorry" Pink almost whispers.

The Diamonds frown and lean forward, not picking up on what she said.

"What was that, Pink?" Blue inquires.

Pink then lifts her head up and stares Blue straight in her eyes.

"I said...I'm sorry" Pink repeats, her voice louder.

White appears to be unfazed by this new remark, however Blue shows confusion on her face and Yellow scoffs unimpressed.

"You're **sorry**? A simple apology can't undo the total of what you have done, Pink! You lied to us, faked your own shattering, and almost shattered many of our loyal gems as well!!! You do honestly believe that an easy 'sorry' will save you from punishment?" Yellow Diamond growls, nearly yelling.

"No" Pink replies.

"Then at least you're enough of a Diamond to know when enough is enough" Yellow sighs, resting a hand on her fist and looking off to the side with a bored glare.

"Answer me this, Pink. Why did you do this? What caused these sorts of feelings to grow and implant themselves in your mind?" Blue asks, her tone it's usual softness, but with slight strictness to it as well.

My mother just stands there, unable to say what she needs to say to clear her conscious.

"Pink, please" Blue pleads, "I can't send you off to the Tower on a guilty conscious. I need to know and more so, we need to know. Tell us where this came from".

Pink bites her lip, hesitant about whether she should really tell Blue about her feelings. I can see the reservation in her. It reminds me so much of myself when I wanted to share my feelings with the Gems but always felt like they'd never understand me like I do. I gently place a hand on her shoulder pad, making my mother turn her head to look at me, and once she sees the nod I give and the support I

non-verbally send, she nods back and I take my hand back off her shoulder.

"You wish to know why Pink betrayed you all? I'll tell you" I speak up.

"Remind me, what importance do you have to this matter other than being the one who brought Pink to us, because I fail to see your relevance in this situation" Yellow says flatly.

So much for the big 'thank you', but whatever.

"I must agree with Yellow, what significance do you bring to this case?" Blue Diamond questions, narrowing her eyes at me.

"Simple, I'm probably the only one who knows how Pink really feels and can say for a fact that I've experienced it myself firsthand. And this is because I'm her son" I answer, dropping that bombshell so very nonchalantly.

The Diamonds gasp in shock, save for White, who just raises her eyebrows.

"*Interesting. I certainly never foresaw this happening"* She comments, being rather chill about it.

"Son!? Just what kinds of things have you been doing with the humans on that planet, Pink?!" Yellow exclaims, totally exasperated.

Blue puts a hand up to her raging sister.

"Yellow, please, we know Pink would never get into **those** kinds of activities. We haven't even schooled her in the ways of reproduction and procreation" Blue insists calmly.

"Blue's right, Yellow, but the thing is that while I am her son, I'm not her son from this point in time. The time I stand in right now is 6,000 years in the past from my present, which would make 6,000 years into the future for you" I explain.

Blue and White look puzzled, while Yellow glares down at me with

a quizzing look on her face.

"So be it then, but how is it that you know what Pink feels when you clearly are not her?" Yellow relents, sounding tired of all the extra information.

"Because the similarities between us are uncanny. I've grown up feeling unloved, abandoned, and alone, never able to have a solid model that I can look up to. Those around me were also so involved in their own self-indulgence that they never cared to think that I may be hurting more on the inside than they could ever know physically" I admit, thinking back to many instances with the Gems.

"That's absurd! Pink never should feel abandoned because we've provided numerous playmates for her to find company in, even that Spinel gem you must've left on your Garden" Yellow remarks, looking at Pink at the last part of her statement.

"Who's Spinel?" I ask Pink with a frown.

"She's....she was my special best friend. At least, that what I wished she could be. But when I got offered Earth as a colony, I was too wrapped up in the fascination of it all to see that it'd hurt her by leaving. Now I wish I had never left on that Garden. I could've brought her with me to your planet and introduced you two. Maybe if I ever do get her forgiveness after this, she'll at least be able to call you her new best friend" Pink explains, her voice low and regretful.

"But, Pink, Yellow's point still stands. You've never felt alone, have you?" Blue asks, sounding like she'll be concerned if Pink disagrees.

Pink tearfully shakes her head, White and Yellow frowning as Blue develops the predicted concerned look on her face.

"You and Yellow were always so firm and strict with me, ordering me around like some common gem. Even though we were always in the same room from time to time, I felt so far away from you. I've always wanted to be closer to you, Blue, and even you too, Yellow and White, but I never felt like I could. That's why I asked to have these playmates. I thought I could find the compassion and

company that I could never find with you in these gems. But no matter how many there were or how much we played, they would never replace what I yearned to have with you three. After a long time with this going on, I grew to think that none of you loved me. I spent years wishing that you could see that I wanted you to care about me and love me like I loved you. I still wish that to this day. Then came the idea of rebellion. Breaking away from this endless internal torture. Only then did I come to think that the only way that any of you would care about me is if I was dead. At least then, I could know that you at least loved me in death" My mother confesses, her lip trembling.

Her words sink deep into me, cutting into my heart like a serrated knife. I knew Pink had suffered overly-prolonged solitude at the hands of the Diamonds, but I never thought of how much more she felt besides the basics of being thrown away. It's truly heartbreaking the more I stir on her words. Sure, I've felt pain like hers, but not on this level. It brings such sadness that I want to hug her and try to help her heal. Then, unexpectedly, Blue gets down from her throne and kneels on the ground in front of Pink, scooping up my mother in her hands and holding Pink close to her now teary-eyed face.

"Pink, of course we love you" Blue elaborates, "Why else would we grant your wish for a colony and give you what you ask for? It is true that you do act out of line from time to time and we have to be strict with you, but we do that so you'll turn out better than us. We've lived a lot longer than you have and have made our fair share of mistakes too. It's too late for us to change, but not for you. You can be the best of the Diamonds, Pink, you just have to let us guide you there".

"If you truly love her though, why did you not listen when she talked about why she wanted to not finish the colony?" I point out, looking up at Blue.

She sighs, frowning down at me.

"I don't know how you know about that, but Pink had been making excuses about wanting to spare her planet. Excuses that were feeble and and utter nonsense. Taking seriously anything that can be described as that is just as foolish as telling them yourself. I didn't

like that I had to be so hard on Pink, but the Diamond Authority has a set way of conquering that has lasted thousands of years with no failures. I simply wished that Pink would stick to following that tradition we taught her and lead on for us in the event she outlasts us" Blue Diamond explains, looking slightly annoyed that I pointed it out.

"Well, did you ever consider that all your being hard on her was the primary cause of her feeling alone and wanting to rebel? If not, then I can't say that this mess wasn't all Pink's fault, but yours as well. You claim that you can't change, but I haven't known anyone to live true to that whole idea in my entire life. Anyone has the ability to change, including you Diamonds. The problem is you just don't want to change. Maybe if you had recognized what you were doing to my mother here, none of this would've had to happen" I say, arms crossed.

"You dare speak that way to us? You may be Pink's supposed offspring, but that gives you no right to address us that way!" Yellow Diamond growls angrily.

She begins to get up, looking ready to fight, but I flash her my Diamond eyes and she quickly changes her mind.

"Fighting will not solve anything, Yellow. It'll only divide you further from those you love and leave you regretting something you could've prevented had you only taken the chance to stop and think about it peacefully" I state, my eyes turning back to normal.

"He's right" White Diamond speaks up, turning all heads her way,*"Arguing and bickering amongst each other will accomplish nothing. Please calm yourself, Yellow"*.

"You're siding with this human?" Yellow grumbles.

"I'm merely agreeing with him. While you and Blue were telling him and my Starlight off, I was listening and understanding what he was saying, and I have to admit that Steven's points are valid. It pains me to know that I passed this cold way of doing things onto all of you, but allow me to be the first to make a change and be better" White continues.

"What are you suggesting then?" Blue Diamond asks, Pink still being held in her hand.

White smiles, a mix of creepy and genuine making up her grin.

"I'm saying that we as Diamonds should start anew with our youngest and give her another chance. It's clear to me now that we've been too hard on Pink, so steps should be taken to rebuild our relationship with her. It's also become clear to me that there are those that are just incapable of fitting in our set society of roles and purposes, so I declare that the colony known as Earth be shut down and used as a neutral zone for all those named the Crystal Gems and any others that choose to live outside Homeworld" The brightly glowing monarch decrees.

Pink's now as happy as can be, jumping off Blue's hands and running over to hug White's ankle. Chuckling, White lifts Pink up like Blue does and cradles my mother close to her cheek. Blue then comes over and hugs White from the side, smiling happily as well. The only one missing is Yellow, who looks over with a sad and guilty expression on her face. Both Blue and Pink wave for her to come. So, with tears threaten to release, Yellow stands up and saunters over, hugging White from the other side with eyes closed and her mouth contorted into a sad frown, her lip trembling. White smiles and pats Yellow on the top of her head. Yellow then sighs deeply, swallows, and opens her eyes with a freshly new smile on her face. She then leans in and gets more deeply enveloped in the warm gesture. The Diamonds are now truly happy and in turn, I'm happy for them. I should probably give em a moment though, so I turn to walk towards the wall we came up by but get stopped by Pink's voice.

"Steven? Where are you going?" Pink asks.

I turn back around to see all four Diamonds staring at me, Pink hopping down and rushing over to stop in front of me. I sigh, knowing that this will be hard.

"I'm going to see my friends Jasper, Lapis, and Peridot. It's time I said goodbye" I reply.

"Goodbye?" Pink cries, "Are you leaving?"

"Sadly, I must. For one, if I remain in this timeline much longer, knowing how much it's been changed, my essence will literally be blown to the cold, dark vacuum of space and for the other, I just don't belong here. I've done what I came here to do, so now it's time I go back to where I belong" I admit.

Pink gets down on her knees, her eyes watering like a fountain.

"Steven, please, don't go" My mother sobs, "Why won't you just stay here? We could make something work, I know we could".

Wringing my hands, I place one on her shoulder, making her look up at me.

"Pink, you come to find that many things don't last as long as you'd like them too. Personally, I hated you for what you did to me, but now that you've reconciled with your family and made peace with yourself, I found it in myself to actually love you for the mother you can be. In all honesty, I never got to meet you when I was growing up and it was always hard for me. But now that I've gotten the rare chance to see you, I will truly miss this time we've shared" I confess.

Pink sobs some more and reaches forward to pull me into her teary embrace, hugging me to her chest while letting the tears out. I hug her back, not minding how wet my shirt's getting, and get let go after a bit once Pink's done crying.

"There, there, Pink. It's not really goodbye. Just look to here and I'll always be with you" I console, touching the Diamond gem on her stomach.

She sniffles and nods, looking up at me with a sorrow smile. I then turn to the three other Diamonds, wondering if they had anything to add.

"Such a shame that you'll be leaving us already" White Diamond admits,*"I was willing to give room in the Palace".*

"Are you sure you have to go? I was just beginning to like you" Yellow smirks at me.

"Sadly, I must. But thanks, Yellow" I reply.

"Even so, I do wish to see you again, Steven. When you get back to your time, please, come and find us. We'll be waiting to have another group hug with you included next time" Blue Diamond says soothingly.

I nod, waving them all one big farewell before walking to the wall of the spire's dome. I then remember something I wanted to tell Pink, so before White can summon her bubble around me, I turn my head and look back at my mother over my shoulder.

"Oh and Mom?" I call to her.

"Yes?" She replies.

"One day, you'll find yourself on a beach. You'll be attracted to some music and find a man playing something you've never heard before, but are fascinated by nonetheless. Don't ever let this man go, whatever you do" I kindly instruct.

"Of course, Steven" Pink Diamond nods.

"And one other thing, a brown-skinned human girl with black hair will find her way onto this beach sometime in the near future. A boulder will attempt to fall on her. Please save her and whatever you do, don't let Pearl train her in sword fighting. Please?" I ask.

"Alright" My mother nods.

"Thank you" I finish.

I then see White's bubble surrounding me, rising to above my knees. With Pink waving in the foreground and the other Diamonds waving in the background, I wave them goodbye as well, the bubble covering me completely. I'm then sent through the wall of the spire and down through the air in a slow and steady pace. It then touches solid ground once more and opens up like a flower bud, dissipating to reveal my three good friends Lapis, Peridot, and Jasper standing in a line waiting for me. Almost immediately after the bubble fades, Lapis rushes forward, followed by Peridot, and then Jasper, the whole trio coming together in their own little group hug.

"So you made it out alive, huh? I must say, you continue to impress

me, Steven" Jasper smirks.

I smile, though halfheartedly, and nod in her direction. Both Peridot and Lapis pick up on my shift in behavior.

"What's wrong, Steven?" Peridot asks, sounding genuinely concerned with no snarky tone.

Lapis mirrors Peridot's concern with her worrying eyes.

"I'm afraid that my time has come, my friends. You've all been the best friends a hybrid like me could ask for and I'll never forget that. But now, I must go home" I sigh sadly.

"Well, wherever you're going, take me with you" Lapis insists, grabbing my arm.

"Me too" Peridot adds.

"I'm sorry, but where I go is a place nobody can follow" I say cryptically.

Lapis begins to cry and I hold her hands clasped in my own.

"Don't cry, Lapis. It hurts to see you so sad" I muse.

"Will I ever see you again?" My water angel sobs.

"A near certainty" I reply with a somber smile.

Lapis then forces down her sobs and grabs me behind the neck to push our lips together one more time. Her lips taste like sea salt, probably due to the tears. I comb a hand through her soft, silky hair as we kiss for what may be the last time. In truth, I never want it to end. Sadly, like all good things do, Lapis then pulls away after a solid two minutes and steps back to stand next to Peridot. Jasper then steps forward and kneels down to put a hand on my shoulder.

"You gonna be ok?" She asks.

Looking around me, I see off in the distance that the Diamonds are waving at me from atop the spire. My vision then focuses back on

Peridot and Lapis, who are looking at me with pained smiles, as if it hurts to be so happy when they should be just so sad. This is what I've dreamed for my whole life. Friends, family, and a mother that I can truly love like I never got the chance to.

"Yeah" I reply, looking back at Jasper, "I think I will be ok".

Jasper nods and stands back up, stepping backwards to get in line with Peridot and Lapis. I then turn around and summon the time orb out of my gem. Walking a significant distance away, I then stop and wish to go back to the present. The orb then shakes and vibrates, replicating the same feels of when I asked to come to the past. It glows bright green and shakes more violently. I then take one last look behind me, seeing all the happy faces of those I love. The time orb then sucks me in and like a snap of fingers, I've vanished from the past.

Although, before I had left, I could've sworn that I heard Peridot say "I wish I could've kissed him too".

Forgiveness Builds a Better Life

Steven's P.O.V

To say I'm scared would be a severe understatement. Right now, I'm terrified. I've heard that even a tiny change in the past can have an enormous impact on the present/future. What if I never see Lapis again? What if I'm left all alone but without the Gem's this time? And, worst of all, what if I die because something happened to Pink or Dad? These questions flood my head like a tsunami, making it hard to breathe and think straight. However, I try and succeed at slowing my breathing down, keeping near and dear to my heart the fact that I did what I could to ensure my own existence and that all that's left to do is dive into what I come across.

My feet make contact with slanted metal, putting me off-balance for a second before I catch myself. Once I'm sure I won't fall and face plant the ground below, I take a nervous and critical look around me. Temple? Check. Beach City? Check. The Gems? No check, but there is something out of the ordinary down below on the space in front of the Temple. What appears to be a low-budget wedding reception is set up, chairs lined up in rows with a central platform that has an arch overhead, decorated by different kinds of flowers but the most common being roses. Roses, huh? I'm starting to get a sneaky suspicion of what's already different.

As for the Gems, they'll more than likely be inside the Temple. Caring not to put the time orb away, I gently hop off the lip of the roof and float my way down onto the porch. After touching down, I open the front and walk in with restrained hesitation. Almost immediately, I'm met with some peculiar changes. For one, the living room's bigger, having more couches and furniture for an apparently larger crowd. Weird. Another thing is the Temple Door. At first, I didn't know if I was imagining it or not, but there are significantly more gemstones embedded on the outside. Luckily, Pearl, Garnet, and Amethyst's are still there, but there's also a

yellow-green triangle gem, a medium blue teardrop gem, an orange rhombus gem, an upside down heart gem, and an upside down pink diamond that is just like mine.

I do a quick double take on all this. So, I recognize the first three gemstones to be from Peridot, Lapis, and Jasper, meaning that they're clearly alive, but what I can't guess is the heart-shaped gem. Could this be a new gem that I haven't heard of before? It very well could be. However, the last gemstone surprises me the most. It's a pink diamond. And I know where mine came from, so that can only mean one thing....

I knock loudly on the door, hoping that the person I'm thinking of will answer. A second later, one of the gemstones lights up. Sadly, it's not the one that I wanted, but what I get instead is the next best thing. The teardrop gemstone glows radiant blue and the door splits apart at an angle. Then, stepping out of her room, comes the water-bending beauty herself, Lapis. She doesn't see me at first but after a polite cough on my behalf, Lapis looks down and goes instantly wide-eyed. She gasps and develops tears in her eyes.

"Babe, you came back!" Lapis cries, rushing over and getting on her knees to hug me.

At least, a hug is what I anticipated. What I really received though was her holding the sides of my head in her hands and her kissing me repeatedly all over my face and neck. I blush from all the affection.

"Peridot and I were so worried about you. After you ran off and didn't come back, Pink urged her to find you with that tracker Peridot injected you with when you were five. It didn't work though and everyone left, except us, to search the city for you. They're still out there as we speak, even Ruby and Sapphire. Both were in hysterics and vowed to find you before they made their vows to each other" Lapis rambles, worry crystal clear in her tone.

Though I'm still not clear on the background of the situation here, I feel bad that I made Lapis worry.

"I'm sorry, Lapis" I say, looking down at the floor, "I just....had to do

something. Something only I could do".

Lapis goes to speak again, but then the sound of rushing footsteps is heard coming down the stairs from my left. My old room isn't there anymore, replaced with a staircase leasing up and out of the Temple, to where though I don't know. As to who's coming down said stairs though is an anxious and frantic looking Peridot. Her nose is buried in a tablet, making it hard for her to see where she's going. When Peridot stops in front of us, she looks right up at Lapis, completely unaware if my presence.

"Lapis! Great news! The tracker in Steven just lit up! We can finally find our boyfriend now!" Peri exclaims happily.

Lapis then chuckles, making Peridot frown in confusion. Only when Lapis points at me and Peridot turns to notice does she understand. Peridot then develops an angry look on her face, glaring at me. Peri then slaps me, not too hard but enough to know that she's upset.

"Don't you dare run off again like that! Do you understand me?" She demands.

I nod and then get Peridot's lips sealed with my own, her arms around my neck and her tears running down my cheeks. Her lips taste lip sour apples and I actually don't want this to end, but Peridot pulls back anyway. I can see that she's still crying, so I guess she was never really mad with me. She was just scared and worried about.

"I'm sorry, Pear Bear" I murmur, seeing a blush erupt on her cheeks, "Can you ever forgive me?".

I'm not sure where these words are coming from or why I have these feelings towards Peridot, but in truth, I'm really not against it. Maybe I just didn't realize it until now. Lapis clearly doesn't mind, which is good since I love her just as much, so this may just work out.

"Oh, Steven, all that matters is that you're back safe and sound" Peridot says, stifling those tears and snuggling into my shirt.

I smile, feeling all warm and fuzzy inside. Lapis then taps me on the shoulder and raises an eyebrow while grinning herself.

"You think you can call Peridot cute names and sell me short? Hah, I don't think so, Pudding Cup" The ocean gem smirks.

"Really? What gave you that impression? Personally, you've must've fallen from heaven because you look like an angel" I counter, grinning smugly.

Lapis rolls her eyes and leans down to give me a kiss too. Her lips taste like blueberries, making a delicious taste alongside Peridot's. I'm caught off-guard when she adds some tongue for a second, but it's only a tease and Lapis retreats back into a hug. With both my girlfriends having kissed me, I feel some things bubbling up from deep down inside me.

Memories. Ones that feel like a dream to me but are now just as real as the fading blue sky. I remember growing up with a caring and loving family of gems. I remember the holidays when Auntie Blue, Auntie Yellow, and Grandma White would come to visit. I remember when I asked Lapis to be my girlfriend and when Peridot asked if I could be her boyfriend. I remember the countless hours of fun I had with Spinel, always thinking that she was an adorable mix of Mickey Mouse and Harley Quinn. I remember asking Mom how I was born, since I had been told by Dad gems usually don't make it past childbirth. She said that my Auntie Blue and Yellow had a special machine made after her and Dad got married, one that would allow me to be extracted from her womb without causing her to be erased. And lastly, I remember how eager I was to set up this wedding for Ruby and Sapphire, everyone nearly ready when I disappeared. Reality then hits me harder than any slap my green girlfriend could dish out.

"Guys, we gotta find the others so we can finish this wedding!" I exclaim, Peridot and Lapis releasing me and grinning at each other.

"There's our boyfriend!" They say in unison, acting as if the real me just returned.

I then grab each of their hands, putting the time orb back in my

gem, and high tail it out the front door, down the porch steps, and onto the beach below. Running down the shoreline towards Beach City, I then stop abruptly, halting my girlfriends as well. They look at me with confused expression, but I then point ahead at something I see.

Approaching slowly from the city is a large entourage of gems, many of which I have only vague memories of, but some that I know by heart. Pearl and Amethyst appear to be panicking, both dressed in rather nice looking suits. The even more hysterical pair though is the engaged couple themselves, Ruby stressing out in beautiful white dress and Sapphire crying while still looking good in a suit herself. Mom and Dad lead the group, Mom looking very well in a pink sleeveless dress with a rose design going down to her midsection meeting a darker accented fabric that goes down to her ankles, accompanied by some crystal high heels, and Dad pulling off a suit just as well as any of the other gems. I stand and wait, hoping that they'll see me. It takes a second, but then Amethyst looks up and, with wide eyes, nudges Ruby and Sapphire, pointing at me. The commotion quickly spreads and sooner than later, Mom locks eyes with me and gasps.

"Steven!" She cries, running at full speed towards me with arms open wide.

I smile and walk towards her slowly. In a mere matter of seconds, Pink reaches me, scooping me off the ground and hugging me so close to her that I fear I might need some rib realignment. Mom sniffles and as I look over her shoulder, I see the rest of the group rush up behind her, stopping just enough so that we'll have some space.

"My precious baby..." Mom sniffles, "I'm so relieved you're alright".

"Of course I'm alright. I love you, Mom" I reply, patting her shoulder.

"I love you, my baby boy. Always and forever" Pink cries happily, resting her head sideways on top of mine.

She then steps back and stands back up, opening the window for

the gems to dog pile onto me with her hugs and tears. Amethyst was glad to have her brother back and Pearl, being like a second mother, was overjoyed that her son was back in her arms. But, the real treat though, was when those two backed off and left me face to face with Ruby and Sapphire. Both come at me from different directions, in the end hugging both sides of me.

"Please don't leave us again, Cutie Pie" Ruby sobs.

"Ruby and I...we're both sorry, Steven" Sapphire cries.

"Sorry? What do you two have to be sorry for? It's not on you, Ruby and it's definitely not on you, Sapphire. This is your special day, not mine. Don't blame yourselves when the fault lies with me" I reassure the engaged pair.

Ruby wipes the tears from her eyes, but Sapphire just lets em be.

"Where did you go?" The one-eyed gem asks.

I sigh, wondering how to best phrase this.

"Let's just say that I took a look at the past and realized that I shouldn't have been angry with you. All of you. With a family as caring as you've all been, I've been too unappreciative of how lucky I've had it all these years. It's time I let go of that and start over. Will you let me do that?" I ask of them.

I feel my two girlfriends come up behind me, Lapis' hand going on my shoulder. I flit my eyes back for a second to acknowledge them but then look back to see Ruby and Sapphire smiling, the tears now gone.

"You needn't ask what's already been granted, babe" Lapis says soothingly.

Peace settles in my heart and as of now, I know that is where I truly belong.

"So.." I begin, rubbing my hands together "Ready to get married?".

Ruby and Sapphire nod joyously.

The next few hours passed by in a blur. Everyone from the wedding entourage got seated in record time and even gave me a moment to phase some proper wedding attire on myself. Spinel was an excellent flower girl, tossing flowers very gracefully. Ruby and Sapphire said their vows and everyone clapped as they fused back into Garnet. I was so happy for them and it looked like I wasn't the only one. The real interesting part though was when Garnet threw the bouquet behind her. The only ones who really dove for it were my water angel and my precious Peridot coming out on top with the bouquet in hand and a wink in my direction. We all know what that means.

After that, the party lasted long into the evening, food and drinks plenty, though Pearl stayed away from the food as per the norm. Spinel, Lapis, and my green queen shared plenty of sparkling grape juice with me as it grew late, our stomachs full from the chips, cake, and other stuffing delights. It was around that time when the Sun began to set and the crowd started to taper off. Pearl, Garnet, Amethyst, Spinel, and my girlfriends all headed back inside the Temple, exhausted after cleaning up the setup. The other gems that were a part of the wedding left to go back to Little Homeworld.

The sky is now orange with a hint of darkness all but present. I sit on the edge of the shoreline, holding the time orb in one hand. Just looking at it reminds me off all I did but it also makes me think that it's best to keep hidden so nobody else can change time. Looking down, I see my answer to that. Setting the orb down, I dig in the sand with my hands until a decent-sized hole is created. I then set the orb down inside and cover it back up with the sand, patting it down firmly so it won't get washed back up.

"Are you doing alright, sweetie?" A voice interrupts me.

I pause and look behind me, seeing Mom walking up to me. We've both changed out of our wedding attire at this point, so she's back to her usual 'Pink Diamond dress'.

"Oh hey, Mom" I say, turning back around as she sits down beside me, "Yeah, everything's fine".

"Are you sure? I don't want you to feel like you're alone, Steven"

Pink asks me as I nod and look out at the sunset.

"I'm sure" I reply.

There's a moment of silence before Mom looks down and notices my guitar laying on the ground next to me.

"You working on a song, sweetheart?" She guesses.

I smile and pick it up.

"You bet. It's called *Change Your Mind*. You wanna hear it?" I ask.

"I would love nothing more, Steven" Pink smiles.

!THE END!

That's right everyone, this story has come to its conclusion. I just want to give a big thank you from the bottom of my heart to everyone who read, voted, and commented on this book. I do this for you guys and I'm not ever gonna stop.

If you're interested in some of my other works, feel free to check out:

My Lovely Goddesses

Pushed Too Far

Elastic Hearts (Steven X Spinel)

and many more!

Well, that's all for now, fellow readers and writers. Until next time, I'm KingMythLord and this has been *His Mother's Son.*